

MARINES IN CRISIS: UNTREATED PTSD **KATHY DOBIE**

# THE Nation.

## THE CHOICE

WHY OBAMA'S THE BEST  
CANDIDATE TO BUILD A  
PROGRESSIVE MAJORITY  
**CHRISTOPHER HAYES**

FEBRUARY 18, 2008  
[www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)

**The Historical Society** is proud to announce the publication of the first installment of the Burnham Electoral Archive, extensive data compiled by Walter Dean Burnham during his many years of research on American electoral behavior, in the December 2007 issue of *The Journal of the Historical Society*. The tables include electorate data for:

- U.S. Presidential Elections, 1788-2004
- U.S. Potential Electorate Estimates, 1788-2004

The issue also includes essays by Burnham and Thomas Ferguson that discuss the Burnham Electoral Archive project in detail and explain its singular importance for American electoral history.

If you join the Historical Society before 3/1/08 you will receive a free copy of this issue of the *Journal*:

[www.bu.edu/historic/forms/ssub.html](http://www.bu.edu/historic/forms/ssub.html)

The Burnham Electoral Archive and other articles are also available for purchase via the **Blackwell Synergy** web site:

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## Letters

### InsensiNativity

JERSEY CITY, N.J.

As a longtime subscriber, I wish Katha Pollitt had had the sensitivity to postpone using her Christmas column to solicit funds for abortions to another holiday ["Subject to Debate," Dec. 31].

I realize that to Pollitt the birth of Jesus Christ is not an occasion on which to show respect, that for her these days are not Christmas but "the holidays." But the fact remains that historically and socially many all over the world, including many *Nation* subscribers, are moved to show compassion and generosity to the poor, the imprisoned, the sick and the dying on this day because of the life and teachings of Jesus. To many the very vulnerability of the newborn Jesus is an argument to respect life in the womb. Pollitt may not believe this. But it would be more appropriate if she solicited funds at Christmas for unwed mothers and selected the birthday of some famous person other than Jesus on which to ask for money so that more of the unborn may be killed.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J.

### Pollitt Replies

NEW YORK CITY

No disrespect intended. I always enjoy hearing from Father Schroth. However, the holiday donations list is not a Catholic fundraiser, and *The Nation* is not a Catholic magazine. The holiday donation list offers a smorgasbord of causes so readers can find one that appeals to their own sense of urgency. Some choose to help a low-income US woman get an abortion with a donation to the National Network of Abortion Funds. Others decide to ensure healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries by donating to the just-founded Women's Health Initiative in Liberia. Maybe some donated to both! *Nation* readers have already contributed \$12,000 to the latter, by the way, which is pretty amazing. It's not too late to give: HEARTT Women's Health Initiative, Box 1097, Stratford, CT 06614.

KATHA POLLITT

[letters@thenation.com](mailto:letters@thenation.com)



### Children Having Babies

SIOUX FALLS, S.D.

Having seen *Juno* recently, I enjoyed Katha Pollitt's column "Maternity Fashions, Junior Size" [Jan. 21]. But I disagree that the movie was saying "for a high school junior to go through pregnancy and childbirth to give a baby to an infertile couple is both noble and cool." When Juno is left crying and disconsolate after the birth of her son, the heartache and sense of loss a mother feels when losing her child is made clear. Juno's raw emotion vividly portrays the idea that her action is anything but "cool." It is devastating.

SHIRLEY MAUSS

NEW YORK CITY

Any movie that helps remove the stigma from adoption should be applauded, not disparaged. Adoption is a viable alternative to teen motherhood. Most children raised in adoptive homes have a better chance than those raised by teen mothers. Most teen mothers who decide to raise their children do so at a terrible cost to their own futures and those of their children, in loss of education and life opportunities.

I have worked in inner-city schools for eighteen years, and while it's true that abstinence-only education is at fault for the increase in teen pregnancy, many of the teens here who become pregnant know about birth control. A girl in our school who is pregnant had an abortion the first time she became pregnant—not an unusual pattern. When I suggested adoption to a guidance counselor, she replied, "We don't do this in our community."

JULIE FRAAD

ASHEVILLE, N.C.

Lack of sex education is not what's causing the explosion of births among entertainers. Is it possible the same people who arrange deals for Britney and Nicole to drink Starbucks and wear Juicy Couture also arrange that the new must-have accessory is a double stroller?

(continued on page 22)

# Bush's Last Hurrah

Senator John McCain, busy pressing his campaign in Florida, didn't bother to show up. The *Wall Street Journal* reported the speech on page 3. The *New York Times* relegated

the full text to its website. TV chatter focused more on Senator Edward Kennedy's stirring Camelot embrace of Barack Obama earlier that day than George W. Bush's proposals in what was, blessedly, his last State of the Union address. What happens when a President gives a State of the Union speech and nobody listens?

But we must pay attention to the damage Bush has wrought. As he delivered his seventh State of the Union, we're mired in two bloody and endless occupations; our economy is cratering; dangers facing the world—from global warming to economic instability to terrorism—are much worse than they were seven years ago. America is more indebted, more isolated and more unequal. Our economy is weaker, our military is near broken, our people are divided.

Instead of forthrightly facing these problems Bush, unsurprisingly, resorted to duck and cover. "From expanding opportunity to protecting our country, we've made good progress," he averred. "Yet we have unfinished business." We can "be confident about our economic growth" in the long run, he said, despite the current "period of uncertainty."

To deal with that uncertainty, the President called for rapid passage of the \$146 billion bipartisan "growth package," from which he has axed the most effective immediate stimulus measures, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office: bolstering food stamps and unemployment insurance. He has also refused to send aid to states to curb budget shortfalls and avert layoffs, and has ignored a longer-term stimulus and a pressing need in its own right: investment in our dangerously crumbling infrastructure. Other than this mild package (smaller, it should be noted, than this year's projected spending on

the Iraq War), Bush asks only for more of the same: making his tax cuts for the wealthy permanent, passing more corporate trade accords and the old grab bag of domestic reforms with which even he could barely conceal his boredom.

Bush focused much of his speech on his disastrous wars. Here the denial is complete. In Afghanistan, "twenty-five NATO allies and fifteen partner nations" are building a "young democracy," he claimed. "These successes" and US allies are so strong that the President is rushing 3,200 marines to that narco-country in response to the urgent pleas of generals alarmed about the growing strength of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

We were told that the surge in Iraq has "achieved results few of us could have imagined just one year ago." The results are so unimaginable, we can expect "tough fighting ahead," and we can't remove our troops until a "free Iraq" is able to defend itself, a chimera that Iraq's defense minister suggests won't happen until at least 2018—another ten years, \$3 trillion and tens of thousands of casualties later.

Pack up the tents; the show is over. The country is ready for Bush to go. Yet Bush's failures are not idiosyncratic. They are the direct expression of the right-wing Republican ideology and policies he systematically pursued. GOP presidential candidates ritually invoke Reagan, not Bush, but they are wedded to Bush's program. They will run on continuing his wars, enshrining his tax cuts, touting his trade agenda. Both candidates for the Democratic nomination know we can no longer travel this road. This fall, the country will have a clear choice: keeping to Bush's catastrophic agenda or ending thirty years of conservative dominance and charting a fresh course.

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## This week @thenation.com

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Complete primary coverage

### CITIZEN KANG

A serial novella by Gary Phillips

### NATION POLL

How can Hillary solve her Bill problem?

### VIDEO NATION

Steven Colbert draws inspiration from *The Nation*

# Not So Superdelegates

The Democratic primary contest is shaping up to be the closest since 1984. The campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are preparing for a delegate battle. If the race goes down to the wire, an elite contingent of superdelegates—unpledged party operatives and elected officials not chosen by primary voters—could play a decisive role, even though most voters don't know they exist. How could the Democratic Party be so, well, undemocratic?

## COMMENT

Rewind to the 1968 Democratic National Convention, which showcased the undue influence of the party's old guard. Big-city bosses like Chicago Mayor Richard Daley handed the nomination to Hubert Humphrey, despite Humphrey's support for a deeply unpopular war and the fact that he hadn't won a single primary. As Rick Perlstein recounts in his forthcoming book, *Nixonland*, Eugene McCarthy won 79 percent of the vote in the Pennsylvania primary but got less than 20 percent of the state's delegates at the convention. The rest were picked by the party machine. The will of the voters was ignored at the convention, and protesters on the streets outside it were met with clubs and tear gas.

Despite the backroom double-dealing, supporters of McCarthy and Robert Kennedy were able to pass a rule at the convention mandating a study of how the party picked its nominee. This rather innocuous effort, initially led by Iowa Governor Harold Hughes, a popular liberal reformer, led to the McGovern Commission, whose 1970 report, *Mandate for Reform*, led to a sweeping revision of party politics, which greatly expanded the number of primaries and ensured that convention delegates were roughly proportional to primary vote results; drastically reduced the power of party officials to serve as delegates and dictate the choice of nominee; and mandated a greater role for rising forces within the party—young people, women, minorities. The new rules helped catapult two dark horses to the nomination, McGovern himself in 1972 and Jimmy Carter in 1976.

By 1980 the party establishment had seen enough. It struck back with a commission of its own, led by North Carolina Governor James Hunt. It returned power to elected officials and party regulars—the superdelegates, who will make up about 20 percent of the 4,049 delegates at the Democratic convention. They include all Democratic members of Congress and every governor, but roughly half of them are Democratic National Committee officials elected by state parties, who range from top party operatives to local city council members. Key interests in the party, like labor groups, can also name superdelegates. According to political scientist Rhodes Cook, superdelegates were created as a "firewall to blunt any party outsider that built up a head of steam in the primaries."

That's what happened in 1984, when Senator Gary Hart launched an insurgent challenge to front-runner Walter Mondale. Hart won sixteen state primaries and caucuses to Mondale's ten, and barely lost the popular vote. Yet Mondale locked up virtually all the party's 700 or so superdelegates even before the primary began. Hart likely would have lost anyway, but the superdelegates sealed his defeat. "I got almost none of them,

# Noted.

**GREEN MACHINE?** At Detroit's premier auto show this January, **General Motors** unveiled plans for an unlikely "green" **Hummer HX**—a 6.75-foot-wide model that will run on ethanol. Eager to appeal to an increasingly petrol-wary public, GM also recently struck a deal with energy company **Coskata** to investigate cheaper methods of producing ethanol. Overall, ethanol production is on track to reach an estimated 11.4 billion gallons this year and as much as 35 billion gallons by 2017.

Putting aside the hype, ethanol's environmental credentials leave much to be desired. Converting corn into fuel is a resource-intensive process that actually uses more energy than it produces. Corn also requires more insecticides, herbicides and nitrogen fertilizer than any other crop, to say nothing of the 1,700 gallons of water needed to produce one gallon of ethanol. If scaled similarly to the smaller Hummer H3, the HX will require almost 450 pounds of corn to fill its twenty-three-gallon tank with pure ethanol. That's enough corn calories to feed one person for an entire year. At a fuel efficiency of barely fifteen miles per gallon, a full tank will get the "outdoor adventure" vehicle approximately 345 miles closer to nature.

BRETT STORY

**A PREMATURE ANTIFASCIST:** When 21-year-old **Milton Wolff** met **Ernest Hemingway** during the Spanish Civil War, he wrote to his girlfriend in Brooklyn, "Ernest is quite childish in many respects. He wants very much to be a martyr...." One year later, Wolff was commanding the **Abraham Lincoln Battalion**, the US volunteers who fought against **Francisco Franco's** fascist rebellion.

After Madrid fell in 1939, Hemingway, who once described Wolff as "tall as Lincoln, gaunt as Lincoln," foresaw his comrade's future: "He is a retired major now at twenty-three," wrote Hemingway, and "pretty soon he will come home as other men...came home after the peace at Appomattox Courthouse long ago. Except...[now] no good men will be home for long." Before Pearl Harbor, **William "Wild Bill"**

**Donovan's** Office of Strategic Services asked Wolff to recruit Lincoln Battalion veterans for Allied intelligence, welcoming their left-wing contacts in occupied Europe. Their work contributed to victories in Italy and Normandy, but a military blacklist named Wolff a "premature anti-fascist"—the first of his many fights with anticommunist witch hunters. "When you stop struggling," he avowed, "you are dead." Wolff died at 92 of heart failure in Berkeley, California, on January 14, an inveterate antifascist. PETER N. CARROLL

**SUPER BOWL SLAVERY:** **Bridgestone Firestone** is the sponsor of the 2008 and 2009 Super Bowl halftime shows. It also runs one of the world's largest rubber plantations, in Liberia. There, in a structure akin to modern-day slavery, workers are shackled by a quota system that withholds pay unless a set number of trees are tapped each day. Firestone says this number is 650, but rubber tappers place the number at 1,125. According to a CNN report, it would take a tapper twenty-one hours each day to reach even the lower rate. This unattainable quota forces workers to bring their children to work or risk losing the meager daily wage of \$3.19; children as young as 7 are working on the plantation.

In November 2005 the **International Labor Rights Fund** brought a federal case—now in its discovery phase—against Firestone for violations of child labor rights. Ironically, NFL commissioner **Roger Goodell** is a board member of **Action for Healthy Kids**, which promotes the idea that "all kids develop the lifelong habits necessary to promote health and learning." How, then, could Goodell allow sponsorship from a corporation linked to child labor? It's a mistake for the NFL to allow Firestone to use the Super Bowl to showcase its brand to more than 1 billion viewers around the world. It may be too late for **Super Bowl XLII**, but Firestone's deal for next year's game must be revoked. EMIRA WOODS

**OSCAR MIAs:** There'll be no quibbling from us about the Academy's nominees in the Best Documentary category, which include Michael Moore's **Sicko**, Alex Gibney's **Taxi to the Dark Side** and Charles

Ferguson's **No End in Sight**. *Nation* film critic **Stuart Klawans** called Moore's healthcare doc a chronicle of "heartbroken, worried, angry, feisty, funny and valiant people" and applauded Ferguson's insider tale of the Iraq War fiasco as "indispensable and peculiarly damning." As we scanned the rest of Oscar's picks we were less than impressed, and asked *Newsday's* **Gene Seymour** for his thoughts. What follows is his take on who's missing from the field:

Was 2007 that good a year for movies to have allowed the following non-nominees to slip under the Academy's radar? Apparently so, and it is with some regret that I acknowledge the following Oscar MIAs, in no particular order.

**Frank Langella:** Sublimity of the type Langella displays as an aging literary lion in *Starting Out in the Evening* rarely, if ever, gets love from Oscar voters. But how could anyone be immune to Langella's consummate mastery of mood and shadow?

**Angelina Jolie:** *A Mighty Heart* tanked and did not deserve to. Nor does Jolie deserve any gratuitous schadenfreude for not making the cut for Best Actress. The world will someday be sorry it dissed both the film and her impassioned turn as **Mariane Pearl**.

**Naomi Watts:** Viggo Mortensen had the thick accent, camp haircut and bravado nude-wrestling scene. But Watts's blend of brittleness and melancholy gave *Eastern Promises* its heart and soul. She routinely punches in excellent work—which makes it easy for people to take her for granted.

**Irrfan Khan:** In a surprisingly decent year for father roles, Khan's performance as the Gogol-phile dad in *The Namesake* was a stirring, heartbreaking depiction of quiet dignity and unyielding love under stress. Khan could also claim a Best Supporting Actor nomination as the cool-witted Captain in the aforementioned *A Mighty Heart*.

**Robert Downey Jr.:** When he goes gonzo as he does in *Zodiac*, people think he's not really acting. But as good as the movie was throughout, you find yourself really missing Downey when he's not onscreen.

**Jonny Greenwood:** For that itchy, insistent score for *There Will Be Blood*, which proves so potent that it blends seamlessly with the third movement of Brahms's violin concerto.

because [Mondale] was considered inevitable," Hart told me.

The obvious beneficiary of the superdelegates this time around is another establishment favorite, Hillary Clinton. Before Super Tuesday, Obama had sixty-three pledged delegates, compared with Clinton's forty-eight. But as we went to press Clinton had a huge advantage in superdelegates, 184 to ninety-five, according to CNN. "Many of the superdelegates were in and out of the Clinton White House, invited to dinners, have received contributions from Clinton allies," says Hart, who has endorsed Obama. "There will be pressure brought to bear to cash in those chips."

Clinton has a wealth of contacts to tap, in the party and in her campaign. There's the former President himself, of course, and Clinton's campaign chair, Terry McAuliffe, who ran the DNC from 2001 to 2005, and a top Clinton surrogate, Harold Ickes, who serves on the DNC's influential rules committee. The Clintons are working hard to bring the large bloc of uncommitted superdelegates into the senator's camp. "I know Hillary is calling superdelegates regularly, which is a smart play," says Art Torres, California Democratic Party chair. Interviews with superdelegates in Alabama, California, Colorado and Massachusetts—a random sample of February 5 states—illustrate this close attention. After Ramona Martinez, a Denver city councilwoman, switched her support from Bill Richardson to Clinton, she received immediate thank-you calls from McAuliffe and Clinton adviser Ann Lewis. In Alabama "Hillary would get the majority of the superdelegates," predicts state party chair Joe Turnham. "A lot of it is longstanding relationships. People go back to the 1980s with Bill Clinton, when he first came to Alabama."

There's often a disconnect between the choices of rank-and-file Democrats and the preferences of superdelegates. In Colo-

rado, Martinez admits, "Obama has a lot more troops on the ground." Obama is expected to do well in Alabama, whose African-American population matches South Carolina's. Even so, the Obama campaign argues that the tally among superdelegates is closer than reported in the media—and that the so-called uncommitted delegates lean his way. "Bill and Hillary got what they could," says a senior Obama campaign adviser who spoke on condition of anonymity. "They picked the low- to-midhanging fruit. The rest of the superdelegates remain neutral or undecided and may be resistant to the Clinton pull."

There's disagreement within the party about how many of the 400-plus uncommitted superdelegates have yet to make up their minds. "There's a lot of people claiming to be undecided," says Pomona, California, mayor Norma Torres, a superdelegate who backs Obama. "I think by now they've decided, but they don't want to say." Superdelegates are notoriously fickle, and can swap candidates at any time. Before the 2004 Iowa caucuses, for example, Howard Dean enjoyed a commanding lead among superdelegates. But after his disappointing third-place finish, they jumped ship, rallying around the eventual nominee, John Kerry. The same thing could happen to Clinton if Obama wins enough primaries and establishment support. And with John Edwards out of the race, he could advise his superdelegates to switch their allegiance, presumably to Obama.

No matter what happens with the superdelegates this year, it's unsettling to have a large bloc of party officials who are not answerable to the party's electorate. "I certainly think their influence should be curtailed," Hart says. In 1988 Jesse Jackson won the primary in Puerto Rico over Michael Dukakis. Yet a month later, Puerto Rico's governor instructed his fifty-one delegates to back Dukakis. "This is clearly machine politics," Jackson wrote then, "and should have nothing to do with the 1988 campaign." The 2008 campaign has again exposed the undemocratic influence of the superdelegate elite. But just as the activists of '68 pushed aside the party bosses, forty years later voters can demand that the party's nominee reflect their choice. **ARI BERMAN**

## Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

### He's Just My Bill

*(A reprise of the Showboat classic as sung by  
Hillary Clinton after the South Carolina primary)*

Along came Bill.  
He wouldn't shut his trap.  
He yammered at the church  
And at the shopping mall.  
He tried to knock  
And mock Barack.  
And all that palaver  
Just turned off the voters.  
But I will not say,  
"Oh, Bill, please stay away."  
He just may still  
Draw voters my way in Super Tuesday's votes.  
If so, he's still my Bill.

## Exit Edwards, Stage Left

There was brutal irony in the live coverage of John Edwards's exit from the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. Perhaps the story would have been different if the media—which in January gave Edwards only a quarter of the coverage accorded Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—had paid more attention to what the former North

### COMMENT

Carolina senator was saying and doing. In its closing days, his campaign achieved rare moments of connection in a political year that has already seen too much division. In his native South Carolina, Edwards climbed atop makeshift stages with actor Danny Glover and bluegrass star Ralph Stanley for events that featured muscular anticorporate appeals for economic justice but invariably finished on the sweetest of notes: with African-American and white Democrats joining hands to sing "Amazing Grace." There was a raw beauty to these moments—a beauty that merited more than the cursory coverage and "who's he hurting" speculation that was the lot of the man who

spoke for “the grown-up wing of the Democratic Party.”

After his third-place finish in South Carolina, Edwards knew he would not be the Democratic nominee. Within the Edwards camp, strategy sessions turned toward discussions of whether he could be a kingmaker in the race between Obama and Clinton. With the 300 delegates he might have won by soldiering on through Super Tuesday, Edwards could conceivably have held the balance of power at a closely divided Democratic National Convention. Presumably he would have aided Obama, whose candidacy holds more promise of healing the divisions between the “two Americas” Edwards sees as pulling the country apart. But even as Edwards spoiled Clinton’s math in key states—in South Carolina, he won among white men—he had little taste for the petty politics of positioning and power plays. That was evident in what turned out to be the last debate of his campaign, when he was supposed to be a spectator but instead emerged on top. As Obama tied Clinton to Wal-Mart and Clinton linked Obama to a slumlord, Edwards asked, “This kind of squabbling—how many children is this going to get healthcare? How many people are going to get an education from this?”

That was a sharp line. But Edwards followed up with a deeper message, which will be needed throughout a Democratic campaign that runs the constant risk of being more about image than substance: “We have got to understand that this is not about us personally. It is about what we are trying to do for this country and what we believe in.” Those words rang true because the steadiness of the speaker’s focus during this campaign had led even cynical Democrats to the conclusion reached by Martin Luther King III, who told Edwards, “You have almost single-handedly made poverty an issue in this election.” Despite all the talk of \$400 haircuts and disappointing past positions, in the end there was a sense that Edwards had earned the right to talk about his vision for his party and his country.

Edwards shaped the 2008 race, offering the first universal

healthcare plan from a major contender, proposing the first economic stimulus package, making an issue of war profiteering. And he was heard. Obama’s rhetoric has grown more powerful and effective as he has borrowed Edwards’s policies as well as his populist phrasing. And when Clinton tells urban audiences she is campaigning to help Americans “lift yourself and your family out of poverty,” it is impossible to miss the Edwards echo. Even Republicans like Mike Huckabee sounded like they’d been reading Edwards’s position papers on trade policy. Now, as a noncandidate, Edwards can and should continue to shape the race. The desire of Clinton and Obama for his endorsement will get his phone calls answered. But perhaps an Edwards endorsement is of less consequence than his continuing presence. Forget the empty speculation about him as a vice presidential prospect; Edwards’s best role will be as the voice of conscience for a party that has yet to recognize that its historic commitment to economic justice must be renewed in a time of recession.

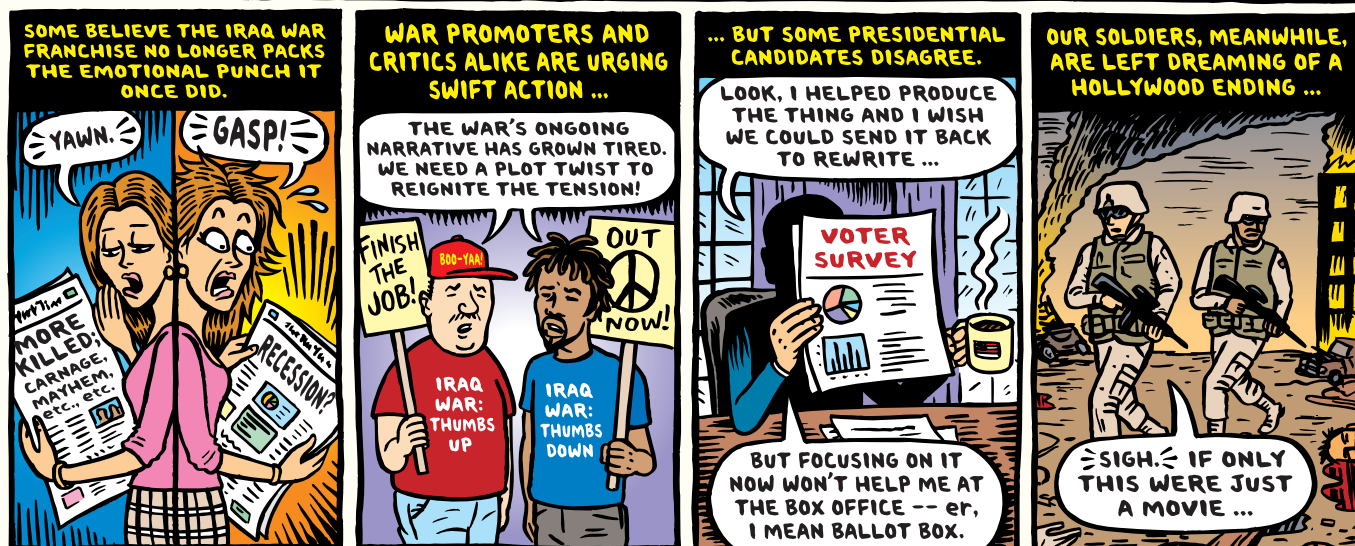
Before Edwards ended his candidacy, his aides had talked about using a core of delegates to influence this summer’s convention and the fall campaign it will launch. To the extent that Edwards pulls the front-runners toward his more progressive economic positions—from his unequivocal opposition to the free-trade regime, to his proposal for public works programs as one response to the economic downturn, to his smart plan to expand Medicaid as a first step toward healthcare reform—he gives Democrats the muscular message they’ll need to counter Republican attempts to benefit John McCain by framing the election as a referendum on national security. Edwards campaigned for the Democratic nomination not only on his own behalf but in the hope that he might redefine his party as a counterbalance to the corporate power that defines the Republican Party. He has ended his formal candidacy, but he ought not to stop his campaign to persuade Democrats to embrace his message that “economic justice in America is our cause.”

JOHN NICHOLS

## Comix Nation

by WARD SUTTON

### STRIKING SCREENWRITERS DRAFTED TO MAKE IRAQ WAR LESS “BORING.”



# Alexander Cockburn

## Back to the New Frontier: A Short History of Change

I'll forgive Obama a couple of his hot-air speeches just for wiping out the Clintons in South Carolina, though I guess we really have Bill and the black voters to thank for that. I'm sure the pleasure will be short-lived, since realistic assessment of the campaign suggests that Hillary Clinton will be facing John McCain in the fall, about as favorable a conjunction as she could ever have dreamed of.

But in the meantime we are being wafted on a brief detour, back to the New Frontier, as Ted and Caroline Kennedy anoint Obama as JFK's heir. It won't be long before Ted Sorensen is writing his speeches. Substitute Bush for Eisenhower, a mountain bike for a golf cart, Iraq for Vietnam, leave Castro in place to give a sense of continuity and *voilà!* It's the 1960 campaign all over again. Oliver Stone should junk his movie about Bush and start hammering out the script for *JFK: The Sequel*, in which the CIA knocks off Obama for trying to pull the United States out of Iraq.

Change may be the mantra, but continuity is the undertow. In rhetorical invitation, though not in concrete matters such as prison sentencing, Americans believe in the possibility of turning to a new script and throwing the old one away. But of course the ball and chain of history is clamped to every ankle. A notorious scandal of the Kennedy years was Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's overruling all expert review and procurement recommendations and insisting that General Dynamics rather than Boeing make the disastrous F-111, at that time one of the largest procurement contracts in the Pentagon's history. As I wrote here in 2004, the suspicion was that Henry Crown of Chicago was calling in some chits for his role in fixing the 1960 JFK vote in Cook County, Illinois, to the impotent fury of the teenage Hillary Clinton, who volunteered to check voter lists for Nixon. Crown, of Chicago Sand and Gravel, had \$300 million of the mob's money in General Dynamics debentures, and after the disaster of the Convair, General Dynamics needed the F-111 to avoid going belly up, taking the mob's \$300 million with it.

Henry Crown has passed on to the great pork barrel in the sky, but his descendants are devoted contributors to Obama, giving him tens of thousands of dollars, as a glance at the website of the Center for Responsive Politics swiftly attests. The Crown family is still deeply involved in the affairs of General Dynamics. Lester and James Crown have both had seats on the company's board in recent years. General Dynamics has ties to Israeli military contractors. A 2003 General Dynamics corporate handout cited by Chicago Indymedia proclaimed "a strategic alliance with Aeronautics Defense Systems, Ltd.," an Israeli firm based in Yavne. According to Indymedia, Aeronautics Defense Systems is the firm that developed the Unmanned Multi-Application System, an aerial surveillance tool the Israeli military uses to "provide a real-time 'bird's eye view' of the surveillance

area to combatant commanders and airborne command posts." The Indymedia story quoted then-Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as saying the agreement between General Dynamics and Aeronautics Defense Systems to bring together "both companies' state-of-the-art technologies in defense and homeland security" was "additional proof of the technological and commercial benefits that alliances between industries from the U.S. and Israel can produce." An eye in the sky over Gaza ends up as a dollar in Obama's war chest.

On January 11 of this year, hot on the heels of an editorial praising Obama as a Friend of Israel in the rabidly Zionist *New York Sun*, Lester Crown circulated a testimonial through the Jewish community, expressing his eagerness "to share with you my confidence that Senator Barack Obama's stellar record on Israel gives me great comfort that, as President, he will be the friend to Israel that we all want to see in the White

House—stalwart in his defense of Israel's security, and committed to helping Israel achieve peace with its neighbors.... Few public figures inspire as much hope and optimism as Barack Obama.... Please pass on this message to all who are interested."

The New Frontier gave us the escalation in Vietnam, and Saddam too. On JFK's watch James Critchfield, head of the CIA's Near East and South Asia division, backed a coup in 1963 against Gen. Abdul Karim Qasim, left in political complexion and the last

Iraqi leader who tried to unite Shiite, Sunni and Kurd. Qasim and many communists were murdered and the Baath Party took over, paving the way for Saddam's seizing of power five years later.

There was an optimistic left in the Camelot years. As Michael Neumann remarked to me this week, the big difference from today was that for young people of all classes, getting ahead was hard but getting a job was and always would be trivial. "They felt economically secure, so they got into recreation—that is, into politics. The big scares were theoretical. No American had actually got nuked or had their freedom crushed by the commies. So people weren't cowardly; they were ambitious about what they could achieve."

Now, Neumann went on, "people feel that foreigners will come to kill them. They're paralyzed. The left feels, Darn it, America does need to be protected. They're not into burning it down anymore—which means they want America to end the wars it can't win but not to be defeated. This absurdity explains why they do nothing." In the 1960s, leftists were very happy to contemplate the prospect of American defeat, so they didn't have to hate the war and love the troops. This was a lot less confusing. Even the left just can't imagine leaving those crazy A-rabs to their own devices. Ho Chi Minh projected competence and control because he was something recognizable in the West: a dirty commie. As Neumann concluded, "The Americans, having excised the secular left-wing rulers from Afghanistan and Iraq, now have to deal with...foreign ways. As true Americans, left and right, they just can't hack that." ■



# Katha Pollitt

## Ms. understanding

*The Nation* accepts pretty much every advertisement that comes its way. This open-door (open-hand?) policy has its downside.

We get tsores from readers—for example, a flurry of outraged letters in 2006 over an ad from FLAME, a Zionist group with strong views about Middle Eastern demography. We live with occasional humiliation—two issues in 2004 carried a garish full-color ad from Fox News, which was a bit like having Rupert Murdoch wipe his shoes on your behind. When I was an editor, the ad policy gave me fits. But as Victor Navasky in his wisdom discerned, it has one great advantage: it makes life simple. You don't have to explain why you rejected this ad last week when you accepted that one three years ago, you don't get embroiled in ideological flash fires over words you didn't write, and you don't get enmeshed in other people's agendas.

If only *Ms.* magazine had followed the Navasky rule, it wouldn't be in such a pickle now, trying to explain why it rejected an ad from the American Jewish Congress that featured headshots of three highly placed women in the Israeli government—Supreme Court president Dorit Beinisch, Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni and Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik—above the words “This is Israel.” Was it because it was “too controversial” and would have “set off a firestorm” among readers, as the AJCongress’s Harriet Kurlander says she was told at the end of a long foot-dragging process? Or was it because, as executive editor Katherine Spillar writes on the magazine’s website, “*Ms.* policy is to accept only mission-driven advertisements from primarily non-profit, non-partisan organizations that promote women’s equality, social justice, sustainable environment, and non-violence”? In fact, that is a fair description of the kind of ads *Ms.* runs, but unfortunately, Spillar didn’t stop there: “Not only could the ad be seen as favoring certain political parties within Israel over other parties, but also with its slogan ‘This is Israel,’ the ad implied that women in Israel hold equal positions of power with men.” I read the ad as simply implying that there are some pretty powerful women in Israel, which is true. But if you have to explain your decisions on your website, you’re already in trouble. Because that invites the rejected advertiser to critique your editorial content going back to the year dot; why, Kurlander wanted to know, did *Ms.* reject the AJCongress ad but run a friendly profile of Queen Noor of Jordan in 2003? Her implication is that *Ms.* has an anti-Israel, pro-Muslim tilt.

I spent an evening with the past three years of *Ms.*, and, Queen Noor notwithstanding, its coverage of Israel seemed if anything more positive than its coverage of Muslim and/or Arab lands. But don’t take it from me; take it from Clare Kinberg, managing editor of *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal*. “After looking through years of issues of *Ms.*,” she wrote in a letter to the *Jewish Daily Forward*, “I came away really furious, not with *Ms.*, but with the American Jewish Congress for their

scurrilous attack on the magazine.” Indeed, the just-published winter issue contains a flattering profile of Livni, one of the women in the AJCongress ad. (The genial Richard Gordon, president of the AJCongress, is not the only person who suspects it was damage control, but even if so, *Ms.* printed it.)

However, gender equality in Israel is not what this flap is about. It’s about walking into a trap labeled “political correctness” and “left-wing anti-Semitism” and “multiculturalist Islam-love.” Charges that *Ms.* is anti-Semitic and anti-Israel are now all over the web. The AJCongress organized a press conference featuring Phyllis Chesler, whose last book, *The Death of Feminism*, argues that the US feminist movement has abandoned the cause of global women’s rights because it is mired in a toxic mix of ’60s leftism, secularism, cultural relativism, political correctness and white guilt. Add anti-Semitism and stir!

This caricature has acquired a fair amount of currency in the media—so much so that *Ms.* should have seen how its rejection of the ad would play. Tiny as the incident may be, it fits an increasingly popular story line. In this version of recent history, American feminists are either indifferent to or actively hostile to the human rights of women around the world, because they are obsessed with their own largely imaginary problems (abortion rights, job discrimination and so on) or because they have learned in women’s studies courses that the West is evil and Islam is great; the people who

really support human rights for women are, curiously, conservatives, the very people who oppose women’s rights here at home! You would never know that it was feminists, not the ladies of the Independent Women’s Forum, who identified as human rights issues such cultural practices as female genital mutilation, child marriage, forced marriage, compulsory religious garb, and the denial of education and healthcare to women and girls.

Are there feminists who fit the media stereotype? Definitely. But from what I have seen, the vast majority of women who call themselves feminists believe that women’s rights are human rights, whether in Iran or France or Palestine or Israel or the United States. To me, that’s what feminism *is*. And no, that belief doesn’t mean arrogantly informing happy people that they’re oppressed, much less supporting the invading of foreign countries under the rubric of women’s liberation. It means lending support, *as requested*, to the efforts of women, east, west, north and south, on behalf of gender justice and equality.

With advice and counsel from the History in Action e-mail list, I wrote An Open Letter From American Feminists to set the record straight on where we stand on women’s human rights. It’s been circulating on the web and by e-mail, and I’m happy to say that in just a week it’s been signed by around 1,200 feminists—women and men, young and old and in between from all walks of life. You can read it at [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com). If you’d like to sign, e-mail me at [kpollitt@thenation.com](mailto:kpollitt@thenation.com) and I’ll add your name. The Open Letter has already been attacked by David Horowitz and *The Weekly Standard*. So it must be right on target. ■



# Naomi Klein

## Disowned by the Ownership Society

Remember the “ownership society,” fixture of major George W. Bush addresses for the first four years of his presidency? “We’re creating...an ownership society in this country, where more Americans than ever will be able to open up their door where they live and say, welcome to my house, welcome to my piece of property,” Bush said in October 2004. Washington think-tanker Grover Norquist predicted that the ownership society would be Bush’s greatest legacy, remembered “long after people can no longer pronounce or spell Fallujah.” Yet in Bush’s final State of the Union address, the once-ubiquitous phrase was conspicuously absent. And little wonder: rather than its proud father, Bush has turned out to be the ownership society’s undertaker.

Well before the ownership society had a neat label, its creation was central to the success of the right-wing economic revolution around the world. The idea was simple: if working-class people owned a small piece of the market—a home mortgage, a stock portfolio, a private pension—they would cease to identify as workers and start to see themselves as owners, with the same interests as their bosses. That meant they could vote for politicians promising to improve stock performance rather than job conditions. Class consciousness would be a relic.

It was always tempting to dismiss the ownership society as an empty slogan—“hokum” as former Labor Secretary Robert Reich put it. But the ownership society was quite real. It was the answer to a roadblock long faced by politicians favoring policies to benefit the wealthy. The problem boiled down to this: people tend to vote their economic interests. Even in the wealthy United States, most people earn less than the average income. That means it is in the interest of the majority to vote for politicians promising to redistribute wealth from the top down.

So what to do? It was Margaret Thatcher who pioneered a solution. The effort centered on Britain’s public housing, or council estates, which were filled with die-hard Labour Party supporters. In a bold move, Thatcher offered strong incentives to residents to buy their council estate flats at reduced rates (much as Bush did decades later by promoting subprime mortgages). Those who could afford it became homeowners while those who couldn’t faced rents almost twice as high as before, leading to an explosion of homelessness.

As a political strategy, it worked: the renters continued to oppose Thatcher, but polls showed that more than half of the newly minted owners did indeed switch their party affiliation to the Tories. The key was a psychological shift: they now thought like owners, and owners tend to vote Tory. The ownership society as a political project was born.

Across the Atlantic, Reagan ushered in a range of policies that similarly convinced the public that class divisions no longer existed. In 1988 only 26 percent of Americans told pollsters

that they lived in a society bifurcated into “haves” and “have-nots”—71 percent rejected the whole idea of class. The real breakthrough, however, came in the 1990s, with the “democratization” of stock ownership, eventually leading to nearly half of American households owning stock. Stock watching became a national pastime, with tickers on TV screens becoming more common than weather forecasts. Main Street, we were told, had stormed the elite enclaves of Wall Street.

Once again, the shift was psychological. Stock ownership made up a relatively minor part of the average American’s earnings, but in the era of frenetic downsizing and offshoring, this new class of amateur investor had a distinct shift in consciousness. Whenever a new round of layoffs was announced, sending another stock price soaring, many responded not by identifying with those who had lost their jobs, or by protesting the policies that had led to the layoffs, but by calling their brokers with instructions to buy.

Bush came to office determined to take these trends even further, to deliver Social Security accounts to Wall Street and target minority communities—traditionally out of the Republican Party’s reach—for easy homeownership. “Under 50 percent of African Americans and Hispanic Americans own a home,” Bush observed in 2002. “That’s just too few.” He called on Fannie Mae and the private sector “to unlock millions of dollars, to make it available for the purchase of a home”—an important reminder that subprime lenders were taking their cue straight from the top.

Today, the basic promises of the ownership society have been broken. First the dot-com bubble burst; then employees watched their stock-heavy pensions melt away with Enron and World-Com. Now we have the subprime mortgage crisis, with more than 2 million homeowners facing foreclosure on their homes. Many are raiding their 401(k)s—their piece of the stock market—to pay their mortgage. Wall Street, meanwhile, has fallen out of love with Main Street. To avoid regulatory scrutiny, the new trend is away from publicly traded stocks and toward private equity. In November Nasdaq joined forces with several private banks, including Goldman Sachs, to form Portal Alliance, a private equity stock market open only to investors with assets upward of \$100 million. In short order yesterday’s ownership society has morphed into today’s members-only society.

The mass eviction from the ownership society has profound political implications. According to a September Pew Research poll, 48 percent of Americans say they live in a society carved into haves and have-nots—nearly twice the number of 1988. Only 45 percent see themselves as part of the haves. In other words, we are seeing a return of the very class consciousness that the ownership society was supposed to erase. The free-market ideologues have lost an extremely potent psychological tool—and progressives have gained one. Now that John Edwards is out of the presidential race, the question is, will anyone dare to use it? ■



# Denial in the Corps



LANCE CPL. JAMES JENKINS, COURTESY CYNTHIA FLEMING

A stressed-out Marine Corps sends its troops on repeated tours in Iraq—then tosses them out when they come back traumatized.

by KATHY DOBIE

**M**arine Lance Cpl. James Jenkins is buried in the same New Jersey cemetery that he used to run through on his way to high school, stopping at the Eat Good Bakery to get two glazed doughnuts and an orange juice before heading off to class. When his mother, Cynthia Fleming, visits his grave, she looks over the low cemetery wall at not only the bakery but the used-car lot where James used to sell Christmas trees during the winter and the nursing home where he worked every summer and says, “Lord, son, you’re on your own turf.” James, who died at 23, is buried in Greenwood Cemetery; the owners told Cynthia they’re proud to have him there.

During his short career as a marine, Corporal Jenkins received many commendations recognizing his “intense desire to excel,” “unbridled enthusiasm” and “unswerving devotion to duty.” It was for heroic actions performed during a fifty-five-hour battle with the Mahdi militia in Najaf that Jenkins was awarded a Bronze Star for valor. The fighting, which began on the city streets in August 2004 and moved into the Wadi al Salam Cemetery, was ferociously personal. Marines and militiamen were often only yards apart, killing one another at close range. When the battle was over, eight Americans and hundreds of militiamen were dead.

After that tour, his second in Iraq, Jenkins could barely sleep. When he did, the nightmares were horrible. He was plagued by remorse and depression, unable to be intimate with his fiancée,

run ragged by an adrenaline surge he couldn’t turn off.

Back at San Diego’s Camp Pendleton the following January, Jenkins took to gambling, or gambling took to him; he became addicted to blackjack and pai gow, a fast-moving card game where you can lose your shirt in a minute. The knife-edge excitement felt comfortingly familiar. Jenkins went into debt, borrowing thousands of dollars from payday loan companies. Busted for writing bad checks, he was locked up in the Camp Pendleton brig that spring pending court-martial. In the months that followed, he was released, locked up and released again. He spoke often of suicide. The Marines never diagnosed his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When his mother called his command seeking help, Jenkins’s first sergeant, who had not served in Iraq, told Fleming he thought James was using his suicidal feelings to his advantage. “I have 130 marines to worry about other than your son,” she recalls the sergeant saying. When his command decided to lock him up a third time, James Jenkins ran.

On September 28, 2005, eight months after returning from Iraq, Jenkins found himself cornered in the Oceanside apartment he shared with his fiancée. A deputy sheriff pounded on the front door, while a US Marshal covered the back. The young man with the “intense desire to excel” decided he could not go back to the brig or get an other-than-honorable discharge. He would not shame his family or have his hard-won achievements and his pride stripped away. And he was in pain.

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## THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.



Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

"He said, 'I can't even shut my eyes,'" his mother says, recalling one of his calls home that month. "He said, 'I killed 213 people, Mom.' He said, 'I can't live like this.' He said, 'Everything I worked for is down the drain,' and he was crying like a baby." While the officers waited for his fiancée to open the door, Jenkins shot himself in the right temple.

In the wake of Jenkins's suicide, the Marine Corps attempted to deny death benefits to his mother by claiming he'd died a deserter; but in a report based on that eligibility investigation, Thomas Ferguson, a special agent from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, described the young man as a "salvageable marine" whose untreated PTSD had led to his suicide.

"LCpl Jenkins was a bona fide war hero," Ferguson wrote. "Unfortunately, it is clear that when he most needed help from the military, the military failed him."

James Jenkins is a casualty of the war in Iraq as much as his fellow marines who died in that cemetery in Najaf, abandoned by an organization that has little tolerance for broken marines and is itself under tremendous stress from sustaining multiple deployments. "They didn't do anything," his mother says. "They just kept locking him up."

According to civilian and military defense lawyers, mental health professionals and veterans' advocates, the trajectory of James Jenkins's postdeployment life, with untreated PTSD leading to misconduct and then punishment, is all too common in the Marine Corps. A marine endures one, two, even three tours in Iraq, serves honorably and well, but returns suffering from combat trauma and starts to drink or abuse drugs or becomes violent at home, and suddenly finds himself ostracized, punished and drummed out of the Corps with an other-than-honorable or bad-conduct discharge. A history of service is tarnished, and the marine is denied benefits—even the treatment necessary to recover from combat trauma—and left with only a bitter sense of betrayal. A Corps review in 2007 of 1,019 other-than-honorable discharges issued to combat veterans during the first four years of the Iraq War found that fully a third of the discharged marines had evidence of PTSD or another combat-related mental illness. Lt. Col. Colby Vokey, the Marine Corps's legal defense counsel for the western United States, estimates that of all the Iraq combat veterans his office defends, one-third have PTSD or another combat-stress mental health issue. Many of these clients have served at least two tours in Iraq.

The factors leading to the abandonment of combat-broken marines are both cultural and operational. The Marine Corps is the youngest, most male, most junior and least married of all the services. Sixty-six percent of the troops are 25 or younger; 13 percent are teens; and 39 percent hold the rank of private, private first class or lance corporal. Fewer than 7 percent are female. The Corps's deeply macho culture, which values stoicism in the face of pain and disdains "weakness," makes it hard for marines to seek help. Judith Broder, a civilian psychiatrist who treats Iraq and Afghanistan vets, says, "They all know of stories where buddies have asked for help and have been ridiculed by the chain of command or given some kind of treatment that is not really adequate and told they have to go back."

This harsh culture is exacerbated by the relentless tempo of training and deployment, which pressures commanders to

quickly replace broken marines with deployable ones. “You read the Marine Corps values and you’ll find that anybody that gets hurt isn’t courageous or doesn’t have honor,” Judith Litz-enger, a civilian defense lawyer and twenty-one-year Navy veteran, explains. “That’s how the marines interpret it: ‘I went to Iraq and I didn’t whine and I didn’t claim that I had a mental disorder, and damn well marines don’t do that—we suck it up.’ And it has to be that way because they have a mission that’s bigger than the number of people they have. They can’t spend all their time taking care of people who have mental disorders. They’ve got to wash them out quickly and move on.”

The Corps also places more emphasis on discipline than any

is what combat did to them, and I think we should feel some responsibility for what happens to them.”

Add to these factors the political and financial pressures surrounding the Iraq War, which have resulted in a mental health system so underfunded that last year a Pentagon Mental Health Task Force termed its staffing “woefully inadequate.” The Navy, which provides psychological healthcare to the Marines, has filled only 72 percent of its psychologist billets and 62 percent of its psychiatrist billets.

“The funding has just been awful, the worst I’ve ever seen in my twenty years in the military,” says Dr. Katherine Scheirman, a retired Air Force colonel who served as chief of medical



Cynthia Fleming visiting the grave of her son, Marine Lance Cpl. James Jenkins.

other branch of the military. According to *USA Today*, the Corps prosecutes close to the same number of troops for misconduct as the Army does, though it is one-third the size. “I don’t think the legal system is being used improperly according to regulations,” Lieutenant Colonel Vokey says. “The problem is I don’t think the system accounts for these folks with PTSD. There’s got to be another way to handle this without lumping them in with every other marine who commits misconduct. They were fine when they went to Iraq, we broke them, this

operations in the Air Force’s Europe headquarters from July 2004 to September 2006. Scheirman says the current political environment has made it “impossible” to give wounded soldiers proper care. “It’s all about money,” she says. “Every kid that gets kicked out with PTSD is gonna be a lifetime of disability payments for the government. Every kid who gives up and kills himself, nothing.” Scheirman’s unit was in charge of evacuating the wounded from Iraq and Afghanistan and transporting them to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany and on to the United States. She says politics infused every aspect of care. When she tried to beef up the hospital staff at Landstuhl, she was told, “No, we can’t put more doctors or nurses in there because it will look like we expect more casualties.” She was not allowed to send the visibly wounded home on commercial planes. “The rule,” she says,

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“was they couldn’t fly commercial if they had injuries that showed because it would upset the American people.” The military planes were so cold the Air Force ended up running clothing drives for hats, scarves and mittens—a situation that continues today. In one e-mail requesting donations, a lieutenant colonel wrote, “Mittens are preferred because they often fit better over wounded hands/fingers.”

“What kind of Army doesn’t provide mittens for its wounded soldiers?” Scheirman asks. “What’s sad is this isn’t the way it’s ever been before. I came into the military under Reagan, and George Bush’s dad—they treated people well. The Clintons treated people really, really well. It’s only this Administration that acts like the lives of these soldiers are expendable.”

**W**hen the fourth Army Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT IV) traveled to Iraq in 2006 to assess the mental health of soldiers and marines in theater, they noted the intensely “personal” nature of duty there—that is, the high percentage of soldiers and marines who knew someone seriously wounded or killed and could describe an event that had caused them “intense fear, helplessness or horror”: seeing a friend liquefied in a tank, being

Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, California, who requested anonymity, marines suffering from combat trauma often decide not to seek counseling because they simply don’t have time. Moreover, they tell the counselor, since they’ll just be sent back into combat, what’s the point? “In some way it is miraculous if someone *doesn’t* have PTSD with these repeated tours,” says Judith Broder, the psychiatrist. She founded The Soldiers Project, which provides free psychological services to Iraq and Afghanistan vets and their families, including, currently, several active-duty marines. “There’s this heartbreaking sense these guys express of, ‘I don’t know who I am or what I did over there, and I have to hold myself together because I’m going to have to do it again, so don’t try to pull me back into something soft and sweet. This is not going to do me good.’”

**“M**aybe we have to recognize that after a deployment or two, you’re not able to deploy anymore because the stresses on the mind are just too great,” says Maj. Haytham Faraj, the lead defense counsel at Camp Pendleton. The case that made Faraj “the angriest I’ve ever been at the Marine Corps” involved a 19-year-old who was severely wounded by a rocket attack during his first tour in Iraq.

‘There’s this heartbreaking sense these guys express of, “I don’t know who I am, or what I did over there.”’  
—Judith Broder, psychiatrist

attacked by IEDs, being caught in the open under sniper fire, “seeing, smelling, touching...dead people.” Last June the Pentagon’s Mental Health Task Force reported that 31 percent of the marines who served in Iraq or Afghanistan are suffering from traumatic stress, and Marine Corps suicide rates have been above average since the United States invaded Afghanistan. In 2004 the Corps reported thirty-two active-duty suicides, six of them from Camp Pendleton.

Marines have not only been heavily deployed during Operation Iraqi Freedom; they’ve been sent into some of Iraq’s most volatile areas, and they suffer 25 percent of the casualties, though they make up only 16 percent of ground forces there. “It has long been recognized that mental health breakdown occurs after prolonged combat exposure, a considerable number of Soldiers and Marines are conducting combat operations everyday of the week, 10–12 hours per day...for months on end,” the MHAT IV report explains. “At no time in our military history have Soldiers or Marines been required to serve on the front line in any war for a period of 6–7 months, let alone [a] year, without a significant break in order to recover from the physical, psychological, and emotional demands that ensue from combat.”

Their deployments generally run seven months, though last year 4,000 marines had their tours extended. Once home, they are given up to thirty days of leave to reconnect with their families, though many cannot even adjust to sleeping in a bed. Then they are back in training for their next deployment. The average break between tours is only six months. According to a mental health counselor at the Marine Corps Air Ground

The marine’s wounds left him unable to control his bowels, and he lost sexual function. After being treated at several military hospitals, he was sent home to his parents on convalescent leave. His military counsel, former Marine Capt. Melissa Epstein Mills, now in private practice, says that during those months, the teen was “falling into the depths of depression dealing with these truly traumatic injuries and the death of his best friend, who died shortly after he was hit. [Then] his wife served him with divorce papers while he was in the hospital. His parents described it as a downward spiral.”

When they found themselves unable to help their son, his parents asked his command at Pendleton to come get him. The 19-year-old confessed to his company commander that he had been smoking pot while convalescing.

“He had been on some pretty heavy painkillers and was being transitioned off,” Epstein Mills explains, “but it was [also] a coping mechanism.” The young man’s regimental commander recommended him for an other-than-honorable discharge for drug use, which, Epstein Mills says, would likely have meant denial of his veterans’ benefits—including mental healthcare—for the rest of his life.

“What a lot of people miss is that, in general, it’s totally up to the commander what happens to their troop,” says Scheirman. “They can send him to the hospital and say, ‘Hey, this guy isn’t able to do his work. Would you look at him for PTSD?’ Or they can just kick the guy out.” A medical discharge, which is generally under honorable conditions, can take many months, sometimes longer, and all the while the commander is stuck with an undeployable marine. An administrative separation usually takes a few weeks, at most. “If you kick the guy out, you’ll get somebody to replace him,” she says. “So that’s the incentive for the commanders.”

Epstein Mills and the 19-year-old’s Marine Corps lawyer won him a general discharge under honorable conditions.

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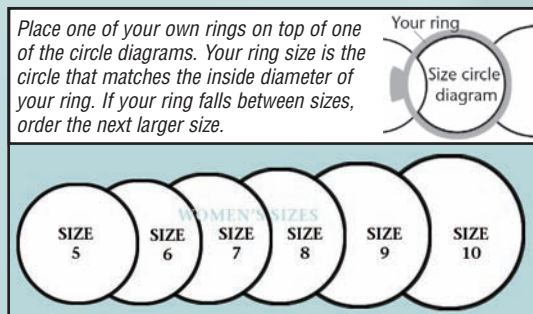
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Unlike an honorable discharge, it will not qualify him for educational benefits from the GI Bill, but he'll probably get some medical benefits.

Before Lt. Col. Andrew Horne left Iraq in 2005, where he was the civil military operations officer for western Anbar province, he and every marine under him above the rank of staff sergeant attended a briefing on PTSD given by the division psychiatrist, a Navy officer. "They said it's been determined that it comes from a feeling of helplessness, and elite units like Marines don't get it," Horne says. "And the ones who do get it have usually been discipline problems before or have a pre-existing problem. So it was really designed to, one, make you not report it yourself and, two, be suspicious of anyone who was reporting it."

More than two years later, despite a growing acknowledgment within the Corps of the mental costs of war, PTSD remains underdiagnosed and undertreated. At Twentynine Palms, some of the civilian counselors on base avoid sending marines to division psychology because at least a dozen marines they referred there for treatment were given "personality disorder" diagnoses and kicked out of the service [for more on the personality disorder scandal, see Joshua Kors, April 9 and October 15, 2007]. Mary Jo Thornton, a licensed family therapist and former base counselor, remembers one

## Many active-duty marines go off base to veterans' centers for counseling, because only there do they feel safe from punishment.

Marine sergeant coming back from his appointment with the naval psychologist, saying, "Thanks, you ruined my career. Now they're ad-sepping [administratively separating] me out of the military. The little guy talked to me for a half-hour and told me I had a personality disorder." Many active-duty marines go off base to veterans' centers for counseling, because only there do they feel safe from punishment.

When Cpl. Michael Cataldi, who served with the Third Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion based at Twentynine Palms, returned from his first deployment, he was angry and depressed. "Helicopters scared me because I picked up a helicopter crash," he says. "Thirty marines and one Navy corpsman all died, and we were the first four people there. I did a body count when I was 20 years old." The pilot was on fire, and Cataldi had to put him out with a shovel. "I smell burning flesh when people grill chicken. I can't be in crowds," he says. "This all happened before I went over the second time."

It took months between deployments for him to get an appointment with the regimental psychologist, and when he did he sensed the doctor was trying to talk him out of his symptoms. "He kind of told me, as I was telling him what I was feeling, that I wasn't really feeling that," he recalls. Cataldi was diagnosed with anxiety and depression, not PTSD, given anti-anxiety meds and antidepressants, and sent back to Iraq. There he was put in charge of the guard at Camp Apache.

After four months the medical officer left Iraq, and suddenly Cataldi had no more meds. "I had a breakdown," he

says. "I even defecated all over myself, and I don't remember doing it." Cataldi was evacuated to the combat stress center at Camp Al-Assad, where he was diagnosed with PTSD and given three weeks of treatment. When he returned to base, he began to get disciplinary write-ups: one for an unauthorized absence, the other for allegedly threatening his executive officer. "They were trying to take my rank and call me a horrible marine," he says. Cataldi ended up facing a nonjudicial punishment proceeding and losing half a month's pay. "They thought I was trying to go home," he says.

When Cataldi returned to the States at the end of his second deployment, with only a few months left on his service contract, he stayed low to the ground, afraid his commanders would take his rank or kick him out. In his last evaluation before leaving the Corps, Cataldi had a fifteen-minute appointment with the naval psychiatrist on base, who told him he had "anxiety disorder."

Unlike the Army and the Air Force, almost every Marine and Navy base has a brig on board, and that makes it easy to use the brig as storage for a troubled marine. "We think pretrial detention is overly prescribed," Faraj says. "More often than not it's used as a tool, because the command doesn't want to deal with someone." Consequently, marines with mental health problems are not only locked up in

a brig without adequate mental healthcare but are asked to make serious legal decisions while actively suffering from mental disorders. "I think doing a court-martial at that time is a setup," Judith Litzenberger, the civilian defense lawyer, says. "It's totally devoid of due process. You don't have a client there that you can talk to. We need some long-term psych hospitals that can treat these guys." The hospital at Pendleton lost its psych treatment certification a few years ago and never worked to get it back, so the camp no longer has an inpatient psychiatric facility. Marines who attempt suicide in the brig are sent to the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, but the naval hospital offers only acute care to marines, so once the suicidal marine is stabilized, he is sent back to jail. Though commanders do not purposely use pretrial detention to break a marine, that is often the effect on a marine suffering from PTSD—as it was in the case of Sgt. Patrick Uloth.

Uloth's command thought "he walked on water," Faraj says. After two tours in Iraq, they even recommended him for an officer-training program. "I thought the Marine Corps did no wrong," Uloth recalls. "I could watch you do something and if the Marine Corps told me you didn't do it, I believed it. I loved the Marine Corps that damn much." But untreated PTSD, pretrial detention and official callousness destroyed his career in the Corps.

It began during his second deployment to Iraq, when Uloth and members of his unit manning a vehicle checkpoint fired on a car speeding toward them. "When they went to see what they'd gotten, in the car were a father and three young kids," Faraj says. "That troubled him so much that he began to have nightmares, and that's when the PTSD set in." Two weeks before his tour ended, an explosive-filled truck detonated at another checkpoint, where Uloth saw two of his marines die. Under heavy fire, he retrieved the decapitated head and body

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of his best friend. Then he held the hand of a dying 19-year-old marine and told him he was going to be OK.

Once Uloth's unit returned to Pendleton, he began to suffer from PTSD, depression and "conversion disorder," characterized by flashback-related seizures. Each time he tried to see the unit psychiatrist, he was given an appointment weeks away—a typical wait, according to Faraj. Uloth decided to go home to New Orleans, where he checked himself into the psychiatric ward at a nearby Air Force hospital. After forty-five days, the Marines sent chasers to pick him up. Back at Pendleton, he was charged with unauthorized absence (UA) and thrown into the brig.

There, Uloth was put in isolation, stripped to his underwear for up to twenty-four hours a day and was so heavily medicated he felt like a "zombie." Once a month he was taken in handcuffs and leg shackles to see a psychiatrist. Faraj wanted to go to trial, sure that they could beat the charges. But after two months in the brig, Uloth told him, "I can't take it anymore. You got to get me out." Faraj's plea agreement included a reduction in rank to corporal and a general discharge under honorable conditions.

**'Look, we don't want to diagnose marines with PTSD. We need them to get back into the fight. Call it something else.' —Marine Corps officer**

While Uloth waited for his discharge to come through, he was transferred to a new unit. When a marine faces misconduct proceedings, he is often transferred from his parent company to a headquarters unit. The people he served with in Iraq were busy training for redeployment or were back overseas, and the rear command knew him only as a marine charged with substance abuse or UA, another one of "the broke, lame and lazy." In the new unit, Uloth, an experienced sergeant, was subject to daily ridicule and assigned to pick up trash.

Uloth told Faraj he couldn't take it. Faraj told him to hang in there, but a few days later, Faraj got a call from the unit's first sergeant, asking if he knew where Uloth was. Six months after that, Uloth was picked up again in New Orleans, this time on a DUI, and thrown back into the Pendleton brig.

The previous terms of his discharge were voided, but Uloth told Faraj, "Any way you can get me out, I just want out." Uloth was separated with an other-than-honorable discharge, with all direct medical benefits denied him, his history of faithful service erased.

Now Uloth cannot afford medication to control his seizures, so he just "wings it" and has ended up in various emergency rooms. He uses alcohol to put himself to sleep. Recently, several of the marines who served with him in Iraq tracked him down. "We all served in combat together and all of them have the same problems," Uloth says. "They've all been diagnosed with PTSD, their lives are upside down, a lot of them have tried committing suicide, a lot of them are alcoholics, they can't keep a marriage or a relationship, everybody's lives are shitholes."

The Marine Corps has always taken pride in caring for its own, but its efforts to take care of mentally wounded marines

have overwhelmingly failed, plagued by denial, machismo, an unrealistic war tempo and a severe shortage of resources. In the spring of 2007 the Corps set up the Wounded Warrior Regiment, where marines suffering from physical and mental injuries could be tracked and supported. "I spoke with the guy at Quantico who was going to be running this warrior regiment," says Steve Robinson, a Gulf War veteran and veterans' advocate. "And one of the first things he said that made me sit up in my chair was, 'Look, we don't want to diagnose marines with PTSD. We need them to get back into the fight. Call it something else, whatever you want to call it, and then we try to retrain them.'"

Robinson told him, "Well, that's great, but the DSM-IV [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders] clearly states that if they have these signs and symptoms, they should be diagnosed."

When members of President Bush's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors visited Pendleton last spring, they spoke with a group of marines housed in the wounded warrior barracks who said they felt they were being punished for being wounded. The marines pointed to the sterile living environment, rigid rules banning rest in their rooms during the day and menial tasks assigned to those well enough to work. In his report to the President's commission, Lt. Col. Leslie Chip Pierce said visitors from the commission "were taken to a location in the barracks known to these wounded warriors as the petting zoo." At the camp's Behavioral Health Clinic, the staff expressed "frustration" too, saying, according to the report, that "line commanders are not always committed to PTSD identification and treatment once they have returned to home base."

After the Marine Corps conducted its review of less-than-honorable discharges, Navy Capt. William Nash, who coordinates the Marines' combat stress program, recommended, according to *USA Today*, that "any marine or sailor who commits particularly uncharacteristic misconduct following deployment...be aggressively screened for stress disorders and treated." Almost a year later, the Navy and Marine Corps have yet to implement these screenings. They simply don't have the manpower.

**M**ore than two years have passed since James Jenkins's death, which Lieutenant Colonel Vokey describes as a "terrible tragedy" that should never have occurred. It was three months after returning from Iraq, in April 2005, that Jenkins first complained of depression and was referred to Division Psychology. There he was diagnosed with "adjustment disorder," which meant he would not receive treatment for PTSD. He was then given Ambien to help him sleep and an anti-anxiety drug, Ativan—and declared fit for duty.

The Ambien didn't help, and he took himself off Ativan. On May 5 he asked for help with his depression again. He was told to continue taking Ambien.

At the end of that month, Jenkins was confined to the brig to await his court-martial. While there, he filled out a Chronological Record of Medical Care, checking the "yes" box after

the question “Have you had any thoughts of injuring yourself or others?” Beside that box, Jenkins wrote, “Combat, Kill the enemy.” Still he received no mental healthcare. The medical officer merely noted, “PT [patient] has hx [history] of Adjustment D/O [disorder] with depression and anxiety.”

Cynthia Fleming kept calling the first sergeant, trying to get her son help. “I told him my son was going to kill himself. They told me the brig was a form of suicide watch. I said, ‘That’s a jail.’”

Inside the brig, the situation took a bizarre turn. Another jailed marine, a gunny sergeant, tried to hire Jenkins to kill five people and kidnap another sergeant’s daughter. Jenkins informed his lawyer and was released in order to work as an informer. But when he began to gamble again and cash worthless checks, he was rearrested. Because his life would have been at risk inside Pendleton, Jenkins was locked up in the Miramar brig instead. A judge quickly released him, but his command decided to send him back to the brig at Pendleton. “Of course, he’s petrified of the guy who he’s reporting on and being back in the brig with him,” Vokey says. “That’s when he took off.”

Jenkins stole a gun from an Oceanside pistol range, a gun with one bullet, he told his mother on the phone. She called his unit; the defense lawyers called, too. “We had talked to the unit, trying to get them to go find this kid because he was going to kill himself, and didn’t get a lot of compassion,” Vokey says. “They were just fed up with him.”

Fleming told her son she could fly out to California the

next day. “Tomorrow will be too late,” he said. “Tell everybody I’m sorry. Tell my sisters, tell my brother, tell my nieces, I’m so sorry. All I wanted to do is make you proud.”

When Fleming arrived at Scripps Memorial Hospital, James was brain-dead. Two noncommissioned officers were in the room with her, one of them James’s first sergeant. Fleming told the nurses, “See that sergeant right there? He said my son was using this to his advantage. But look at my baby now.”

His command gave up on him, but Jenkins never gave up on the marines—not when it counted. The citation accompanying his Bronze Star reads, in part, “With the squad pinned down under intense enemy fire in the Najaf cemetery, he moved along the lines to reestablish communication with Company B. When he reached their position, four enemy militiamen located to his direct front attacked. Without regard for his own well being, Lance Corporal Jenkins climbed on top of a tomb and fired directly down at the enemy.... After eliminating the four militiamen, he returned to the squad’s position and directed an attack that destroyed four additional enemy combatants. He continued to risk his own safety as he covered the withdrawal of his fellow Marines to friendly lines.”

These days, Cynthia Fleming rarely goes into the storage room where she keeps James’s belongings; the scent of him lingering on his clothes is too painful. “But one day I went out there and I picked up his boots that were in a box, and when I picked up his boots, the Iraqi sand fell out, and I lost it,” she says. “His boots was so worn you could tell that boy did some fighting and running over there in Iraq.” ■

Superhuman effort isn’t worth a damn unless  
it achieves results.

- Ernest Shackleton



# The Choice

Why Obama is more likely than Clinton to bring about a new progressive majority.

by **CHRISTOPHER HAYES**

It's gotten to that time in the primary contest where lines are drawn, camps are solidified and conversations around dinner tables grow heated. My friend Dan recently put it this way: "You start talking about the candidates, and next thing you know someone's crying!" The excellent (and uncommitted) blogger Digby recently decided to shut down her comments section because the posts had grown so toxic. The recent uptick in acrimony is largely due to the narrowing of the field. While once the energy was spread over many camps, it is now, with the exits of Dennis Kucinich and John Edwards, concentrated on just two, leaving progressives in a fierce debate over whether Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama would make the better nominee, and President.

According to polling data as well as my conversations with friends and colleagues, progressives are evenly split or undecided between the two. This is, to me, somewhat astonishing (about which more in a moment), but it also means that at a time when other subgroups within the Democratic coalition are leaning heavily toward one candidate or the other, progressives are at a moment of maximum leverage.

Insofar as the issues discussed during a presidential campaign are circumscribed by the taboos and pieties of the political and media establishments, they tend to be dispiriting for those of us on the left. Neither front-runner is calling for the nation to renounce its decades-old imperial posture or to end the prison-industrial complex; neither is saying that America's suburbs and car culture are not sustainable modes of living in an era of expensive oil and global warming or pointing out that the "war on drugs" has been a moral disaster and strategic failure, with casualties borne most violently and destructively by society's most marginalized and—a word you won't be hearing from either candidate—oppressed. And yet, this election is far more encouraging (dare I say hopeful?) than any in recent memory. The policy agenda for the Democratic front-runners is significantly further to the left on the war, climate change and healthcare than that of John Kerry in 2004. The ideological implosion of conservatism, the failures of the Bush Administration and, perhaps most important, the shifts in public opinion in a leftward direction on war, the economy, civil liberties and civil rights are all coming together at the same time, providing progressives with the rare and historic opportunity to elect a President with a progressive majority and an actual mandate for progressive change.

The question then becomes this: which of the two Democratic candidates is more likely to bring to fruition a new progressive majority? I believe, passionately and deeply, if occasionally waveringly, that it's Barack Obama.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Had you told me a few years ago that the left of the Democratic Party would be split between Obama and Clinton, I'd have dismissed you as crazy: Barack Obama has been a community organizer, a civil rights attorney, a loyal and reliable ally in the State Senate of progressive groups. For the Chicago left, his primary campaign and his subsequent election to the US Senate was a collective rallying cry. If you've read his first book, the truly beautiful, honest and intellectually sophisticated *Dreams From My Father*, you have an inkling of what young Chicago progressives felt about Obama. He is one of us, and now he's in the Senate. We thought we'd elected our own Paul Wellstone. (Full disclosure: my brother is an organizer on the Obama campaign.)

That's not, alas, how things turned out. Almost immediately Obama—likely with an eye on national office—shaded himself toward the center. His rhetoric was cool, often timid, not the zealous advocacy on behalf of peace, justice and the dispossessed that had characterized Wellstone's tenure. His record places him squarely in the middle of Democratic senators, just slightly to Clinton's left on domestic issues (he voted against the bankruptcy bill, for example). As a presidential candidate, his domestic policy (with some notable exceptions on voting rights and technology policy) has been very close to that of his chief rivals, though sometimes, notably on healthcare, marginally less progressive.

But while domestic policy will ultimately be determined through a complicated and fraught interplay with legislators, foreign policy is where the President's agenda is implemented more or less unfettered. It's here where distinctions in worldview matter most—and where Obama compares most favorably to Clinton. The war is the most obvious and powerful distinction between the two: Hillary Clinton voted for and supported the most disastrous American foreign policy decision since Vietnam, and Barack Obama (at a time when it was deeply courageous to do so) spoke out against it. In this campaign, their proposals are relatively similar, but in rhetoric and

posture Clinton has played hawk to Obama's dove, attacking from the right on everything from the use of first-strike nuclear weapons to negotiating with Iran's president. Her hawkishness relative to Obama's is mirrored in her circle of advisers. As my colleague Ari Berman has reported in these pages, it's a circle dominated by people who believed and believe that waging pre-emptive war on Iraq was the right thing to do. Obama's circle is made up overwhelmingly of people who thought the Iraq War was a mistake.

Clinton's fundamentally defensive conception of how to defuse the Republicans on national security (neutralizing their hawkishness with one's own) is an example of a larger problem, rooted in the fact that so many of her circle served in her husband's Administration. Their political identities were formed in the crucible of crisis, from the Gingrich insurgency to the Ken Starr inquisition. The overriding imperative was survival against massive odds, often with a hostile public, press or both. Like an animal caught in a trap that chews off its leg to wriggle away, the Clinton crew by the end of its tenure had hardly any limbs left to propel an agenda. The benefit of this experience, much touted by the Clintons, is that they know how to fight and how to survive. But the cost has been high: those who lived through those years are habituated to playing defense and fighting rear-guard actions. We know how progressives fared under Clintonism: they were the bloodied limbs left in the trap. Clintonism, in other words, is the devil we know.

Which brings us to the one we don't. A President cannot build a movement, but he can be its messenger, as was Reagan. Part of what tantalizes and frustrates about Obama is that he seems to have the potential to be such a messenger and yet shies away from speaking in ideological terms. When he invokes union organizers facing Pinkerton thugs to give us our forty-hour week, or says we are bound to one another as "our brother's keeper...our sister's keeper," he is articulating the deepest progressive values: solidarity and community and collective action. But he places more rhetorical emphasis on a politics of "unity" that, read uncharitably, seems to fetishize bipartisanship as an end in itself and reinforce lame and deceptive myths that the parties are equally responsible for the "bickering" and "divisiveness" in Washington. It appears sometimes that his diagnosis of what's wrong with politics is the way it is conducted rather than for whom.

In its totality, though, Obama's rhetoric tells a story of politics that is distinct from both the one told by Beltway devotees of bipartisanship and comity and from the progressive activists' story of a ceaseless battle between the forces of progress and those of reaction. If it differs from what I like to hear, it is also unfailingly targeted at building the coalition that is the *raison d'être* of Obama's candidacy. Consider this passage from Obama's stump speech:

I've learned in my life that you can stand firm in your principles while still reaching out to those who might not always agree with you. And although the Republican operatives in Washington might not be interested in hearing what we have to say, I think Republican and independent voters outside of Washington are. That's the once-in-a-generation opportunity we have in this election.

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Obama makes a distinction between bad-faith, implacable enemies (lobbyists, entrenched interests, “operatives”) and good-faith ideological opponents (Republicans, independents and conservatives of good conscience). He wants to court the latter and use their support to vanquish the former. This may be improbable, but it crucially allows former Republicans (Obama Republicans?) to cross over without guilt or self-loathing. They are not asked to renounce, only to join.

Obama’s diagnosis of the obstacles to progress is twofold. First, that the division of the electorate into the categories created by the right’s culture warriors is the primary means by which the forces of reaction resist change. Progress will be made only by rejecting or transcending those categories. In 1971 a young Pat Buchanan urged Richard Nixon to wield race as what would come to be known as a wedge issue. “This is a potential throw of the dice,” he wrote, “that could...cut the Democratic Party and country in half; my view is that we would have far the larger half.” Obama seeks to stitch those halves back together.

Second, that the reason progressives have failed to achieve our goals over the past several decades is not that we didn’t fight hard enough but that we didn’t have a popular mandate. In other words, the fundamental obstacle is a basic political one: never having the public squarely on our side and never having the votes on the Hill. In this respect the Obama campaign is uniquely circular: his political appeal is rooted in the fact that he’s so politically appealing. This means that when he loses, the loss affects him worse than it would other candidates, since it also cuts against his message. But when he wins, particularly when he wins big, as he did in Iowa and South Carolina, the win means more because it reinforces the basic argument of his campaign.

The question of who can best build popular support for a progressive governing agenda is related to, but distinct from, the question of electability. Given a certain ceiling on Clinton’s appeal (due largely to years of unhinged attacks from the “vast right-wing conspiracy”), her campaign seems well prepared to run a 50 percent + 1 campaign, a rerun of 2004 but with a state or two switching columns: Florida, maybe, or Ohio. Obama is aiming for something bigger: a landmark sea-change election, with the kind of high favorability and approval ratings that can drive an agenda forward. Why should we think he can do it?

The short answer is that Obama is simply one of the most talented and appealing politicians in recent memory. Perhaps the most. Pollster.com shows a series of polls taken in the Democratic campaign. The graphs plotting national polling numbers as well as those in the first four states show a remark-

ably consistent pattern. Hillary Clinton starts out with either a modest or, more commonly, a massive lead, owing to her superior name recognition and the popularity of the Clinton brand. As the campaign goes forward Clinton’s support either climbs slowly, plateaus or dips. But as the actual contest approaches, and voters start paying attention, Obama’s support suddenly begins to grow exponentially.

In addition to persuading those who already vote, Obama has also delivered on one of the hoariest promises in politics: to bring in new voters (especially the young). It’s a phenomenon that, if it were to continue with him as nominee, could completely alter the electoral math. Young people are by far the most progressive voters of any age cohort, and they overwhelmingly favor Barack Obama by stunning margins. Their enthusiasm has translated into massive increases in youth turnout in the early contests.

Finally, there’s the question of coattails. In many senses there’s less difference between the two presidential candidates than there is between a Senate with fifty-one Democrats and one with fifty-six. No Democratic presidential candidate is going to carry, say, Mississippi or Nebraska, but many Democrats in those states fear that the ingrained Clinton hatred would rally the GOP base and/or depress turnout, hurting down-ticket candidates. Over the past few weeks a series of prominent red-state Democrats, most notably Ben Nelson, Kent Conrad and Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, have endorsed Obama. When I asked a Democratic Congressional candidate in the Deep South who he preferred at the top of the ticket, he didn’t hesitate: “Obama is absolutely the better candidate. Hillary brings a lot of sting; he takes some sting out of them.”

Whoever is elected in November, progressives will probably find themselves feeling frustrated. Ultimately though, the future judgments and actions of the candidates are unknowable, obscured behind time’s cloak. Who knew that the Bill Clinton of 1992 who campaigned with Nelson Mandela would later threaten to sanction South Africa when it passed a law allowing the production of low-cost generic AIDS drugs for its suffering population—or that the George W. Bush of 2000, an amiable “centrist” whose thin foreign-policy views shaded toward isolationism, would go on to become a self-justifying, delusional and messianic instrument of global war? In this sense, Bill Clinton is right: voting for and electing Barack Obama is a “roll of a dice.” All elections are. But the candidacy of Barack Obama represents by far the left’s best chance to, in Buchanan’s immortal phrasing, take back the bigger half of the country. It’s a chance we can’t pass up. ■

## Letters

(continued from page 2)

Forget about the long struggle to free women (and men) from the biological drudgery of proliferation; the increasing vogue is to spawn. Over the past ten years or so, when women in the entertainment industry have taken a hiatus to replicate themselves, they have graced the covers of fashionable

magazines in all their stripped-down-to-a-mere-biological-function glory. “Articles” have been splashed across the pages of checkout rags desperately attempting to glamorize one of the more grotesque aspects of life.

Babies are good for profits, and if you have enough babies, in twenty years they

are good for keeping labor in its place. Encouraging girls to get pregnant has less to do with religious conviction than with the almighty dollar. We need to start looking at this as the mass-marketing campaign it is, now with movie-length commercials encouraging consumer replication.

DAISY ROLAND

# Books & the Arts.



DOUG CHAYKA

## Lives on the Ground

by ADINA HOFFMAN

Six decades since the birth of Israel and the demise of Palestine, fifteen years after Oslo, seven past the start of the second intifada, just months beyond Annapolis, and the mere mention of Holy Land politics will, more likely than not, cause even the sharpest of eyes to glaze over. The arguments for and against this particular peace plan or that interim solution have by now become so predictable that a macabre kind of repetition compulsion has set in, with all the parties behaving a bit like Karen, the doomed heroine of Hans Christian Andersen's "Red Shoes," who finds she can't take off her weirdly possessed slippers and so dances herself to death.

Which isn't to say that one should stop caring or paying attention. And here I speak not as an observer from afar but as someone who lives in Jerusalem and who continues—with a Karen-like helplessness I can't deny—

*Adina Hoffman is the author of House of Windows: Portraits From a Jerusalem Neighborhood. She has just completed a life and times of the Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali, forthcoming from Yale University Press, and is one of the editors of Ibis Editions.*

to start each day with a blast of bad news from the local newspaper and the tired rhetoric that inevitably attends the discussion of crumbling Knesset coalitions and Gaza power plays. The stories of individual people who live and breathe the sweeping political choices made by prime ministers and presidents are, however, another matter, especially when such eyewitnesses reflect on their lives in print. Memoirs of this sort offer readers the chance not to *escape* politics but to grasp the flesh-and-blood implications of all those generalizing gestures made on high.

Read side by side, two of the most celebrated recent autobiographical books from this beleaguered patch of land emphasize just how distinct two adjoining Middle Eastern microcosms can be. *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, by Israeli novelist Amos Oz, and *Once Upon a Country*, by Palestinian philosophy professor and Al-Quds University president Sari Nusseibeh (with Anthony David), offer drastically different views of Israel/Palestine and more specifically of the Jerusalem where both men grew up.

Since his third book, the darkly psychosexual and historically charged *My Michael*, appeared in 1968, Oz has filled the role of

### A Tale of Love and Darkness

By Amos Oz.  
Translated by Nicholas de Lange.  
Harcourt. 538 pp. Paper \$16.

### Once Upon a Country

*A Palestinian Life.*  
By Sari Nusseibeh, with Anthony David.  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 542 pp. \$27.50.

### Palestinian Walks

*Notes on a Vanishing Landscape.*  
By Raja Shehadeh.  
Profile. 211 pp. £9.99.

### Dark Hope

*Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine.*  
By David Shulman.  
Chicago. 226 pp. \$22.

one of Israel's most respected and "representative" novelists. Over the years, though, his high-profile public persona—ruggedly handsome, casually dressed, calmly articulate moral spokesman for the Ashkenazi center-left (he was one of the founders of Peace Now and has remained an unwavering advocate of a two-state solution)—has, in a sense, overshadowed his fiction writing. His allies and enemies alike tend to know his craggy visage

and political positions better than the contents of his recent novels, and it is only half in jest that he is often called the chief rabbi of the state's secular liberals. That said, Oz's twenty-third title, an account of his humble beginnings in the Jewish Jerusalem of the 1940s, has become something else altogether—a "cult book," as it has been described, snatched up by more than 100,000 Israelis during just the first two years following its publication in 2002. (Nicholas de Lange's lucid English translation appeared in 2004.) It is one of Israel's bestselling books of all time. Clearly, many identify deeply with both the personal and national story Oz tells; Israeli critics have compared his epic to those by Proust and Mann, and some local readers have even labeled it a kind of contemporary Israeli bible.

**H**ardly holy writ, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* is, in fact, an intimate exfoliation of the life of the author's immigrant family—at the center of which rests the awful fact of his mother's suicide when he was 12 years old. The book succeeds powerfully as an affectionate depiction of the hothouse atmosphere of this particular home and the wider (though still ingrown) community of pre-state Jerusalem's Jewish oddballs, nudniks and voracious readers. These were European refugees who embodied at the same time the most cosmopolitan sort of learning and the most profound sort of provincialism. Oz's librarian father, Arie Klausner, was a frustrated scholar who "could read sixteen or seventeen languages and could speak eleven (all with a Russian accent)." He was also a man who, together with his dreamy wife, Fania, and precocious son, Amos, would spend months making arrangements and preparing mentally for the most solemn ritual of walking five minutes to the local pharmacy to telephone relatives in far-off Tel Aviv.

The peculiarly truncated sense of scale that Oz conveys—in which the entire known universe appears to exist within a few bedraggled blocks—is a perfect encapsulation of both a coddled child's perspective and the true Jerusalem syndrome, familiar from those medieval maps that turned the town into the omphalos, the hub around which the rest of creation revolves. Libraries loom large in this cramped cityscape—so much so that Oz announces at one point, "When I was little, my ambition was to grow up to be a book." The line is amusing, though Oz's aspiration to bookishness is also an indication of what ails his memoir, which despite its various charms is often oppressively literary.

A kind of *horror vacui* dominates, with Oz pumping his pages full of superfluous descriptions, similes, metaphors and words, words, words; his favorite mode is the rambling list. The book is too long by at least 200 pages, and the author repeats himself shamelessly. Every time borscht is served, for instance, there is an "iceberg of sour cream floating in it," so that the epithet comes to seem downright Homeric. The same jokes are trotted out several times, as are the same grim anecdotes about European anti-Semitism. On one page, as part of a 101-word sentence (102 in Hebrew, a language known for its compaction), he describes the

opposite Jerusalem, the Jerusalem I hardly knew, the Abyssinian, Arab, pilgrim, Ottoman, missionary, German, Greek, brooding, Armenian, American, monastic, Italian, Russian Jerusalem, thick with pine trees, menacing yet fascinating...

Then, less than twenty pages later, and without any apparent self-awareness or memory of the lexical glut he has so recently unleashed, Oz sets out to account for the

other Jerusalem...the alien, aloof, shrouded Jerusalem, the Abyssinian, Muslim, pilgrim, Ottoman city, the strange missionary city of crusaders and Templars, the Greek, Armenian, Italian, brooding, Anglican...

He drones on this time for a full 134 words.

Oz's tendency toward verbal excess—why use two words when twelve will do?—reflects self-indulgence of a fundamental sort. A deep-seated narcissism runs through the heart of this ultimately rather preening book, and it all too often blocks Oz's view of the rich human scene he sets out to portray. More than a tribute to the lost world of Jerusalem's refugee intellectuals, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* is really the author's song—or opera—of himself. Which is not to say that larger political or social concerns are absent from the book. If anything, they're inextricably bound to Oz's sense of himself as shining representative of the Jewish state and its put-upon Eastern European founders.

To judge from the book's runaway commercial and critical success, this is precisely the role that many readers want him to play: chief rabbi indeed—and maybe also poster boy for a kind of noble victimhood that many twenty-first-century Israelis cling to as a frantic form of self-justification. As Oz made explicit in various interviews published at the time of the book's publication, he feels his parents' class of impecunious, decidedly non-elite Ashkenazim, together with the entire

Zionist project, has gotten a bum rap in recent years; his memoir is his attempt to set the record straight—and perhaps to assure his devoted local audience that they are not the bad guys, they are not to blame. The 1948 war was one "the Arabs started," he writes. His parents and their neighbors were good but desperate people, with threadbare clothes and no other refuge from Hitler's Europe but Palestine. A few days after the UN partition plan was announced, "hundreds of armed Arabs came out of the Old City, singing bloodthirsty songs, roaring verses from the Qur'an, howling '*idbah al-Yahud*' (butcher the Jews), and firing volleys in the air." Pity me, pity us—Oz cries out: *we suffered too*. Like so many tales told in this part of the world, it is all about *me* and *we*. They still barely exist.

**I**f Oz is interested in forging a myth of his own origins as well as of his country, Sari Nusseibeh prefers to debunk. While he, too, was raised in a hothouse, as the privileged son of one of Jerusalem's most distinguished and ancient Muslim families (since the seventh century they have held the literal key to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), he has perhaps a bit less to prove and never once casts himself as the victim. On the other hand, as a Palestinian—and a Palestinian writing in English, for a foreign audience—he starts out as something of an underdog, and he and co-writer Anthony David have clearly set out to make a subtle political point or two to a readership that is probably much more familiar with Israel's saga than Palestine's. But the book is not a polemic. It's very much the story of Nusseibeh's political and intellectual growth, told in a mild and good-naturedly self-deprecating tone and cast against the backdrop of his people's troubled history.

*Once Upon a Country* was inspired, he says, by Oz's memoir, which, in the generous terms typical of Nusseibeh, he calls a "masterpiece." Although he grew up "no more than a hundred feet away from where Oz lived out his childhood," he was struck by the fact that "there were hardly any Arabs in [Oz's] story, and not a hint of the world I knew as a child." (Born in 1949, Nusseibeh is ten years Oz's junior.) His book attempts to tell something of what went on across the road while also offering a clear-eyed reckoning of the state of the Palestinian national movement. There are no heroes here, even though Nusseibeh himself might reasonably be viewed by readers as one: he could easily live a much more carefree life elsewhere but has chosen to stay in Jerusalem and work not just for his people's independence but also for what might be

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called, without condescension, their education. With admirable humility and a pair of mismatched socks, he goes about the business of helping shape a university (Al-Quds), a state, a civil society.

Nusseibeh is an unpretentious and endearing character whose seeming contradictions may in fact be his greatest strength. A product of the old aristocracy, he's a forward-thinking democrat who weeps when he reads Thomas Jefferson. He's at once an idealist and a pragmatist, a bluejeans-wearing graduate of Oxford and Harvard who admits that the "thought of being burrowed for days in library stacks or chain-smoking...over a pile of notes in a café has always been far more alluring to me than jockeying for position

of Jerusalem through the early twentieth-century emergence of the Young Turks, and on through Nusseibeh's birth—are riddled with basic errors, names scrambled and the stories of important events told incorrectly. To take but one example: the Islamist militant Sheikh Izz a-Din al-Qassam's name keeps changing from Qassam to Cassam; he is repeatedly called "a simple village cleric," which he wasn't (he was a highly learned religious scholar who studied at Al-Azhar in Cairo and was a major figure in the 1921 Syrian revolt against the French in that country); and the famous circumstances of his death are completely garbled. Inspired by Qassam, the entire 1936–39 revolt of the Palestinian Arabs against British rule and

Zionist settlement is treated breezily and as a kind of joke—"something straight out of the Three Stooges"—which, when one reads in any depth the history of Palestine, one learns

## A memoir is not just a record of what is remembered; it is also an account of what is seen.

and power." Yet time and again he finds himself at the eye of the political storm. An almost accidental activist, he risks his hide to write and circulate political leaflets during the first intifada; he also serves as a central figure in various behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts, at one point becoming the PLO's man in Jerusalem and later founding, with former Shin Bet head Ami Ayalon, the People's Choice, a grassroots Palestinian-Israeli peace movement. Imprisoned by the Israelis on trumped-up charges, his family menaced by the authorities, his university campus threatened with Israel's decision to run its "security wall" right down the middle of the school's soccer field, he continues somehow to maintain his sense of humor and purpose.

Nusseibeh is also a Palestinian patriot with a genuine admiration for what he calls the "dynamic energy" of Israeli culture. His first encounter with actual (and not bogymen) Israelis takes almost comic form when he disembarks from an El Al plane in Tel Aviv, just after the 1967 war, and finds himself faced with the ragtag demeanor of the purportedly all-mighty enemy. He wonders, "How could such a badly dressed, ill-mannered people, who couldn't even stand in line for a cab, defeat all the Arab armies in the same number of days it took God to create the cosmos?" He suspects he may be in the presence of fellow Beatle fans. "They were normal people like us," he decides.

Sometimes, however, one admires Nusseibeh more than his book. The initial historical sections—which bounce along from the Caliph Omar's seventh-century conquest

it was not. Even if one considers this gross mischaracterization in the context of Nusseibeh's patrician background and the class tensions that marked the revolt (the urban aristocrats felt threatened by the rebels, who came mostly from the poor peasantry), it seems tonally bizarre for a man who has spent much of his life involved in grassroots Palestinian politics to dismiss with such casual cynicism the twentieth century's first Palestinian uprising. Whether this is a product of Nusseibeh's attitudes or his co-writer's sloppiness is impossible to know. The footnotes very oddly cite just a single source for almost all of the pre-'48 material: a historical survey written by an English journalist.

Equally strange is the book's almost entirely Western cultural orientation. Aside from his devotion to medieval Arabic philosophy and contemporary Palestinian politics, Nusseibeh seems indifferent to the rest of Arab, and specifically Palestinian, culture: references to Lewis Carroll, Bertrand Russell, Hegel, Auden, *Walden* and Monty Python abound, but when he mentions a novelist, it's C.S. Lewis (or Amos Oz!) and not Palestinians Ghassan Kanafani or Emile Habiby; Handel and Hendrix are both here, but not a single oud. And when an occasional Palestinian artist or thinker is mentioned, there are jarring mistakes or misplaced emphases—such as the description of the Arab nationalist, educational reformer and eloquent diarist Khalil Sakakini as "a poet." (An important figure in other respects and one of Palestine's finest prose writers, Sakakini composed a handful of conventional

poems but certainly was no poet.)

Nusseibeh is entitled to his literary and musical tastes, of course, and he is not alone in being a Palestinian grandee whose education was so very European. But it seems peculiar, to say the least, that an intellectual who has given his life to Palestine wouldn't evince more interest in its living culture. It's not a matter of Nusseibeh's being cosmopolitan and bigger, somehow, than national boundaries—but of the fact that he maintains a studied distance from his own culture. This is a culture that, it should be said, has long woven protest into its poetry and poetry into its protest, and I cannot think of a single significant Palestinian writer who isn't somehow engaged with the various ways that the local landscape and lore are bound to history and politics. Not so for Sari Nusseibeh, whose real audience for this flawed yet moving book lives, it seems, not on the West Bank but on the Upper West Side. If Oz is too obsessed with *us*, Nusseibeh seems overly concerned with *them*.

**A** memoir is not just a record of what is remembered; it is also an account of what is seen. Nusseibeh was struck not by the fact that Oz had excised Palestinian Arabs from his childhood memories but that he'd hardly noticed their presence in the first place. As two other new memoirs make clear, such seeing (all seeing?) is a matter of choice. Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks* (forthcoming in the United States from Scribner) and David Shulman's *Dark Hope* have received much less press than the aforementioned volumes, yet both deserve serious attention. Each is a vivid and quietly devastating testament to the necessity of looking hard—and owning up to whatever one sees.

On the gradually expanding shelf of Palestinian memoirs, Shehadeh's books deserve a special place. Since his first collection of diary entries, *The Third Way*, was published in 1982, he has been charting his people's plight more steadily and honestly than almost anyone. Taken together, that first collection, along with *The Sealed Room*, *Strangers in the House*, *When the Birds Stopped Singing* and the volume at hand are almost like chapters in the same, ongoing saga. For Shehadeh's frank, persistent and deeply grounded writing is part and parcel of a basic philosophy of staying put and bearing nonviolent witness to the difficult dailiness of Palestinian existence on the occupied West Bank. The notion of being *samid*, or steadfast, and remaining on the land no matter what hardships that entails is one that runs throughout all his books, becoming ever more fraught with time, as the political

horizons narrow and the wall closes in. Like Nusseibeh, Shehadeh—a lawyer and human rights activist who writes in English and has both a Western degree and a foreign wife—could enjoy a much simpler life elsewhere, and many of his Palestinian colleagues, friends and relatives have made the choice to leave. But Shehadeh is a man of real principle, one who clearly believes he does the most good by enduring with dignity in the land of his birth.

**S**uch dogged holding-on isn't a given, and part of the sober force of Shehadeh's approach comes from his willingness to admit his own uncertainty and even weakness. "In the uneasy first years of the millennium," his new book begins, "I felt that my days in Palestine were numbered. But whether Palestine or myself would slip away first was an open question." *Palestinian Walks* is a modest, often raw, book, conceived around a series of six rambles on which the writer, a lifelong hiker, set out over the course of several decades. Each leads him into a landscape at once tangible and imaginative. "A man going on a *sarha*," he explains, using the Palestinian term for the sort of walks he likes to take, "wanders aimlessly, not restricted by time and place, going where his spirit takes him to nourish his soul and rejuvenate himself."

That may sound like, well, a walk in the park—but as quickly becomes clear, a modern-day stroll through the Ramallah hills is hardly a form of escape, and Shehadeh is no mincing *flâneur*. While he writes in loving detail about the rock rose, the iris and the cyclamen, and lets his mind and prose meander over the stories of family and friends who have passed through these wadis and ridges over the years, his book is in large part the chronicle of a demolition job: the settlements and the wall are gobbling up his beloved land at a frightening pace. Even the thistle has been politicized. As he explains in one typically startling passage, the fact that Palestinian peasants use the potherium thorn, or *natsb*, for all sorts of practical purposes—as a broom or a mattress—matters little to the Israeli authorities, who have taken to using its prickly ubiquity on certain tracts of land as evidence that these plots are "uncultivated" and may therefore be appropriated for settlements. The book is full of such microcosmic atrocities, and though the small patches of flower and green that do remain seem still to lift Shehadeh's spirits, his walks also force him to contemplate the near-hopelessness brought about by the infamous "facts on the ground" that lie at the heart of the Middle East conflict. Readers more ac-

customed to grayish newspaper generalities about the "situation" would do well to reckon with the painful particulars of Shehadeh's account, which is at once gentle and angry, resolute and realistic.

The same could be said for Shulman's brave and often searing book, which tells another, parallel story of *sumud*, steadfastness. The Iowa-born Israeli Jewish professor—a world-renowned Sanskrit scholar, translator from Tamil and Telugu, husband, father, grandfather, former medic in the Israeli army and 1987 MacArthur fellow—is not, by his own account, a natural activist. He is someone who made the choice as a young man to live in Israel because he had "fallen in love with the Hebrew language." Yet after the 1977 electoral victory of Menachem Begin's Likud Party, he found himself watching "in horror as Israel rapidly transformed itself into a paranoid, smug, and rather violent ghetto." Things have gotten much worse since, and at a certain stage, Shulman felt he could no longer stand off to the side—for the sake of the Palestinians and for that of Israel, Judaism and maybe even humanity itself. ("Hell is realizing that one did not help when one could have," reads the book's epigraph.)

*Dark Hope* is a diary of his work, from 2002 to 2006, with Ta'ayush, the Palestinian-Israeli group that has taken up the most difficult and dangerous hands-on work of peacemaking: it brings convoys of medicine and food into the West Bank and helps Palestinian farmers harvest their wheat and olives, its members often placing themselves physically between groups of wild-eyed gun-toting settlers and Palestinian peasants simply trying to sow their fields. Like Shehadeh's book, Shulman's offers the record of a thousand piercing particulars, indignities too "small" to make the headlines but when taken together point directly to a systematic policy of injustice of the largest and most appalling dimensions. It is, indeed, this sense of skewed scale—the activists' humble gestures pitted against a huge military-ideological machine—that makes the book so wrenching. (Reading Nusseibeh's and Shulman's books back to back, one is left with little doubt that the Israeli government and army consider nonviolent activists much more threatening than terrorists.)

In patient and often heartbreaking detail, Shulman charts the brutal police assault that the activists must endure on the cold winter day when they commit the high crime of attempting to deliver blankets to the Palestinian cave dwellers south of Hebron; the grotesquely symbolic morning they spend trying to gather up the vast quantities of rat poison pellets that settlers have delib-

erately spread throughout Palestinian fields (sheep and deer have begun to die, and the poison may already be present in the milk the peasants drink); a vicious physical attack by settlers on a Ta'ayush group that has come to the village of Twaneh to help the peasants plow. In this instance, an enraged settler wearing a skullcap and ritual fringe hurls Shulman to the ground and punches him "before moving on to his next target." Shulman writes:

I feel pain, surprise, fear, rage. What is worse, I have seen their faces up close, and it is perhaps the most unsettling vision I have ever taken in, one I will later try to blot out, for these are not the faces of the usual human mix of good and evil, of confusion and clarity, of love and hate; the eyes are mad, killers' eyes—it is like looking at something utterly demonic, something from the world of myth. We are staring not into an abyss—for all is here on the surface, present, evident, and horrible—but into a volatile vortex of pure hate. I have no doubt they will kill us if they can. They seem to hate us, the leftist traitors, even more than they hate their Palestinian victims.

## Where Abstract Starts

I sit here it is 4:00  
Should I say it?  
Death occurred to me  
And the fit over bounded  
My physical thought  
As I lie here  
It must be my underlying thought

Know now where it comes from  
Know now where abstract starts  
I sit here, I lie here  
It is 4:15

And I should say it  
Out in the open, under the stars  
Rebounding in my physical body  
My non-existing into  
The snows of abstract flesh

That flood with light my sorrow

JOSEPH CERAVOLO

This is vintage Shulman: at once focused keenly on the situation (dramatic, moral, sensory) in which he finds himself yet also attuned with a kind of fierce precision to his inner shifts and starts. And the author is just as likely to question himself and his own motivation as he is to doubt the wisdom of the Israeli High Court.

Beautifully written and emphatic in its calm insistence on the need to take both re-

sponsibility and action, *Dark Hope* is notable not just for the bleak picture it paints of the nightmare that the settlers and their sponsors, the Israeli government, have brought to millions of Palestinians but also, as its title suggests, for the faith it places in a basic human decency and in the belief that *there must be another way*. It is essential reading for anyone who wants—or hopes, however darkly—to grasp the lay of this punished land. ■

## New Old Things

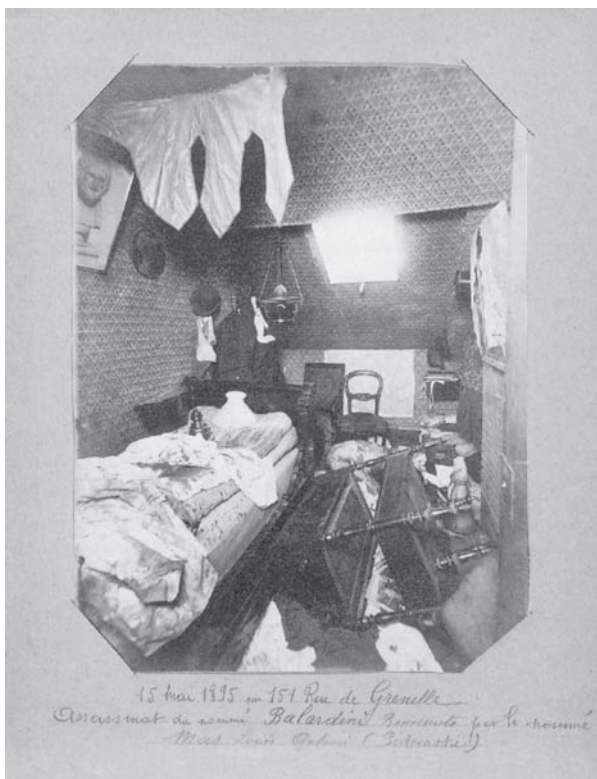
by FRANCES RICHARD

**"C**ollectors," wrote Walter Benjamin, "are physiognomists of the world of things."

Luc Sante is such a collector, rescuing materials from the dustbin (or used-record bin) of history. Whether tracking the origin of words like "funk" and "dope"; eulogizing an old New York of burned-out buildings and flamboyant addicts; listening to the Mekons and the blues; reading Apollinaire, Terry Southern and *Tintin*; looking at Robert Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio* and Farm Security Administration photographs; extolling cigarettes; or remembering his immigrant Belgian parents and soul-killing high-school job at a seedy factory molding nameless plastic parts, Sante traces the lineaments of a world that has not vanished because he is still writing about it. As he says of downtown Manhattan in the 1970s, "I was enthralled by decay and eager for more."

*Kill All Your Darlings: Pieces 1990–2005* collects mostly portraits, plus reviews and catalog essays. First published in places like *Granta* and the *Village Voice*, the selections are short but expansive. Subjects are writers, artists, musicians and their haunts—Francesco Clemente in 1985, painting murals at the Palladium on Fourteenth Street; Buddy Bolden in 1902, improvising "Funky Butt"

*Frances Richard's book of poems, See Through, was published by Four Way in 2003. She writes frequently about contemporary art, teaches at Barnard College and the Rhode Island School of Design, and lives in Brooklyn.*



The scene of Benvenuto Balardini's murder by Louis-Antoine Mas, May 15, 1895

### Kill All Your Darlings

*Pieces 1990–2005.*

By Luc Sante.

Yeti. 299 pp. \$17.95.

### Novels in Three Lines

By Félix Fénéon.

Edited and translated by Luc Sante.

New York Review Books. 171 pp.

Paper \$14.

at the Union Sons Hall in New Orleans. Sante's deep preoccupation is an outlaw history of Modernism in which avant-gardists and roustabouts sync up. Masters of the idiom include Robert Johnson and Charlie Patton, Walker Evans and the anonymous rural photographers presented in Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973). Certain innovators (Rimbaud, Dylan) loom as importantly as in other histories of the Modernist recognition (ecstatic, agonized) that "I is somebody else." Sante, however, selects his heroes not through survey or snobbism but by dint of a passionate gaze into the face

of their work. It functions as a mirror.

Such fervent identification with aesthetics offers a method—one of few good ones—for forging a persona, a community and an ethos. This is another argument implied in *Kill All Your Darlings*, and it is grounded in autobiographical detail. As readers of the memoir *The Factory of Facts* (1999) know, Sante was born in Belgium in 1954 and arrived in the United States in the early 1960s. He grew up bilingual, bicultural and working-class. "I thought I might someday be a cartoonist or an historian or a researcher of the paranormal," he recalls. "Then, not long before my tenth birthday, a teacher told me I had talent as a writer, and for some reason that changed everything." Or rather, it brought everything together, since an author whose interests include Hergé—creator of *Tintin*, the "Euclid" of the comic form—and the bluesman's fabled pact with the devil at the crossroads—allegedly sworn by Robert Johnson, Tommy Johnson and others—has upheld that 9-year-old's ambitions. Sante's mother drilled him in French and was reluctant to speak English. His father was a socialist whose eventual Parkinson's and dementia were related to a lifetime of toxic factory labor. Thus, in the essay "The Injection Mold," when the teenage Luc arrives on the plastic-parts shop floor, he understands that the machine in question is not only a rig he operates but a rigid shape into which society pours the ductile materials of teenagers without privilege. He reads Céline while feeding the extruder, because his books "were all spat out in brief, angry bursts." Most kids in dead-end New Jersey jobs in 1970 were probably not reading *Death on the Installment Plan* in French. But then, such conscious self-fashioning from inherited oddments—either towering, glowering archetypes or "folk-lyric readymades"—also seems as American as rock 'n' roll.

Often, in these essays, what molds consciousness is rock 'n' roll. Or it is dope—a thing not high, not snooty but tintured nonetheless with mystery.

It could mean "to poison," "to lubricate," "to medicate," "to adulterate," "to predict," "to figure out," or "to dawdle".... You could say that "dope," a purely and utterly American word, stands for the familiar unknown.... It is the stuff in the cabinet, under the stairs, out in the toolshed, in an unlabeled jar, pooled at the bottom of an old tin can, stuff you use without really knowing much about it, stuff that works but that you don't care to inquire too deeply

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about. This describes an enormous category in American life.

Sante, of course, does care to inquire deeply. He wears his research lightly. But, as his cultural histories *Evidence* (1992) and *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York* (1991) have shown, his fact collection is prodigious. He likes to fold one icon into another, as in parsing Dylan through John Berryman and Hart Crane, or to focus, like a novelist, on minor characters as lead-ins to the greats. Often the humble onlooker is himself, as in his reminiscence of living downstairs from Allen Ginsberg, who once complained to him about a loud stereo. Elsewhere we are reminded of John McKendry, curator of

aspect of Sante's writing that risks being tiresome, especially since one longs to hear his thoughts on, say, Claude Cahun, or Billie Holiday, or Kathy Acker—or some soulful iconoclast we don't yet know about, whom Sante would be uniquely qualified to find.

The crucial mention of a woman appears in the volume's dedication, to *New York Review of Books* co-founder and longtime editor Barbara Epstein. And true to form, if this marginalia is followed up, it opens voluminously. As befits a rags-to-riches literary protagonist, Sante's professional life began in the mailroom. He started there at the *NYRB*, became Epstein's assistant and developed into a frequent contributor. Some of the best pieces in the

present collection first appeared in its pages, and Sante acknowledges that "she formed me as a writer." So the theme of elective affinity takes on another shade. Anyone who

thinks to do so, surely, can outline a private pantheon in which real-time mentors and colleagues correlate with the adopted dead. But not everyone does think to do so. Such forgetfulness allows the web of relationships that embolden free and tough creative practice to atrophy. Sante's self-appointed task is to think carefully about what it means to appreciate, to imitate, to rebel against, to inherit—and thereby to construct a cultural matrix that permits some badass elbow room. Reminding us that serious readers of text and image learn by apprenticeship, he shows how the election of forebears and compatriots builds an ad hoc, transhistorical mutual-aid society, a gene pool of style. (This is why the dearth of women artists in the essays—as opposed to the marks that have clearly been made on Sante's life by living women—is noteworthy.) For, as Benjamin argues, past and present are dialectical. The past undergirds the present. But the present deciphers and recalibrates the past: "To renew the old world—that is the collector's deepest desire." Renewing the old world changes it.

An interesting exercise, then, would be to map the network of adjacencies spun out around the nodal point Luc Sante. Just one remove would connect Epstein's protégé to the great days of *Partisan Review*, where Epstein worked early on; or to her companion Murray Kempton and *NYRB* co-editor Robert Silvers; or to co-founders Elizabeth Hardwick and Robert Lowell. Brother critic Greil Marcus, who contributes an introduction to *Kill All Your Darlings*, joins a line into which Sante's Bard College students in the

history of photography could be said to be grandfathered; the trajectory also points back through his parents' wartime experience in Belgium to touch the peasants and small-holders who were their forebears. Through Sante, Epstein and Co. come into constellation not only with undergrads and anxious émigrés but with *High Times* magazine, for whom Sante wrote the essay "Why Do You Think They Call It Dope?" Add in, among others, Buell Kazee and Blind Lemon Jefferson, who grace the classic *Anthology of American Folk Music*, compiled by Harry Smith in 1951, since Sante contributed liner notes to the 1997 Smithsonian Folkways reissue. This won him a Grammy Award, another unlikely connection for midcentury literati and Walloon Catholics alike. Or take the raconteurs of the old *New Yorker*. It's true that in "A Riot of My Own," Sante ruefully recounts his attempt to write up a melee in Tompkins Square Park for "The Talk of the Town." "The piece here is in many ways disfigured by my pathetic attempts at *New Yorker* style," he remarks, and like most of his criticisms, it feels apt once he's pointed it out. Nevertheless, bards of dissolute gnosis like A.J. Liebling and Joseph Mitchell exert their influence in his background, and reading parts of *Kill All Your Darlings* may put you so strongly in mind of E.B. White's *Here Is New York* that you'll want to reread it. Sure enough, Sante blurred the book when it was reissued in 1999. It's one of many such introductions, glosses and commentaries that draw the web taut.

**T**his high-obsessive productivity threatens to turn consideration of Sante's work into mere colorful lists. It would be remiss, however, to discuss *Kill All Your Darlings* without acknowledging two other major projects completed in 2007. The first was an exhibition, "The Museum of Crime and the Museum of God," curated for TriBeCa's Apex Art. Presenting 100 items from his personal collection of death letters, holy pictures, dime novels and torch songs, Sante's twinned "museums" foregrounded the raw materials that feed his research, celebrating the lurid and the mad. The second accomplishment, *Novels in Three Lines*, translates and introduces a series of *faits divers*, or "sundry events," edited for *Le Matin* in 1906 by Félix Fénéon. An "invisibly famous" newspaperman, anarchist and impresario of the Post-Impressionists, Fénéon arranged mayhem like haiku. Sante puts the triplets into a sinewy English that still sounds like French, and it's hard to imagine another writer who could have served so well.

## Sante writes maculate prose: lithe and tight sentences stained with musk and breath.

prints and photographs at the Metropolitan Museum, who gave Mapplethorpe a decent Polaroid camera. Roy Stryker and Marion Post Wolcott, respectively head of and contributor to the Farm Security Administration, get mentions, as does Cisco Houston, Woody Guthrie's sideman. Victor Hugo is considered less as a poet or national treasure than as a painter—a bit part within his own career—whose technique involved eccentric use of "soot, black coffee, fingerprints, fingernails, matchsticks, inkblots, stencils, sprays of water, the impression of cloth textures, of lace, of stones." In other words, Hugo—like all of Sante's "scalawags" and "mahatmas"—used dope.

**W**ith brief exceptions, the chosen ones are male. An admiring excursus on Patti Smith comes as an aside in the Mapplethorpe discussion, and Wolcott, Berenice Abbott and Helen Levitt are named under Evans's aegis. Georgette Magritte, the painter's wife, accompanies her husband; and Sante's own wife, the writer Melissa Holbrook Pierson (with whom he collaborated on *O.K. You Mugs: Writers on Movie Actors*, published in 1999), makes a cameo in his review of the corporatized farce that was Woodstock '99. Apropos the one-hit wonders on the CD boxed set *Nuggets: Original Artyfacts From the First Psychedelic Era*, he observes, "Numerous are the hapless females apostrophized as 'Girl.'" That's about it. The imbalance is surprising in one so resourceful at finding avatars who fulfill and reflect his tastes. It's also the only

Finding his daughter, 19, insufficiently austere, Jallat, watchmaker of Saint-Étienne, killed her. It is true that he has 11 children left. There was a gas explosion at the home of Larrieux, in Bordeaux. He was injured. His mother-in-law's hair caught on fire. The ceiling caved in.

It's as if James Thurber were piloting Rimbaud's "Le Bateau Ivre," which puts another kink in the affective lineage. Unlike Thurber, however—and like the gun-runner Rimbaud, but differently—Fénéon had a politics of the deed as well as of the word. (He was, for example, a defendant in a famous show trial following the 1894 assassination, by anarchists, of French President Sadi Carnot.) Sante emphasizes the mix of compassionate regard and amused brutality in Fénéon's treatment of misfortune, and in so doing revisits persistent questions about the social efficacy of art. His bandit Modernism does not discard the idea of welding word to act. But it frames the act as bemused, left-handed. Writing, as he knows, makes nothing happen—except that it calls together the tribe of stubborn nonjoiners and reminds them of their role as vocal witnesses. This is not nothing. To describe precisely, Sante suggests, remains a subtly, inefficiently, yet persistently radical endeavor.

As a summary of sundry events, then, compare a passage—longer than three lines, but still a compressive tour de force—from "My Lost City," Sante's paean to the downtown Manhattan of his raffish years:

When the blackout happened, on the evening of July 13, 1977, it briefly seemed as though the hour of reckoning had arrived, when all those outsiders would seize control. Naturally, no such thing occurred. The outsiders seized televisions and toaster ovens and three-piece suits and standing rib roasts and quarts of Old Mr. Boston and cartons of Newports and perhaps sectional sofas, but few would have known what to do with the levers of society had they been presented to them in a velvet-lined box. But then, my friends and I wouldn't have known either. For all the obvious differences between the SRO-dwellers and ourselves, we were alike in our disconnection from any but the most parochial idea of community. In the end the mob dissolved like a fist when you open your hand, and the benches on



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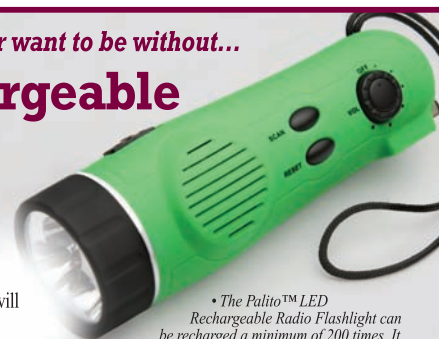
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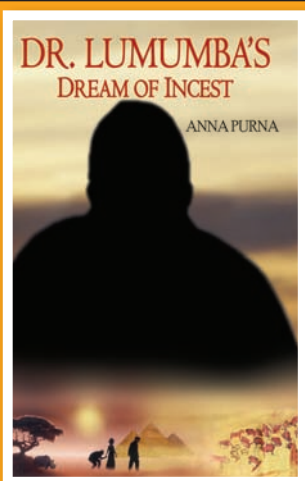
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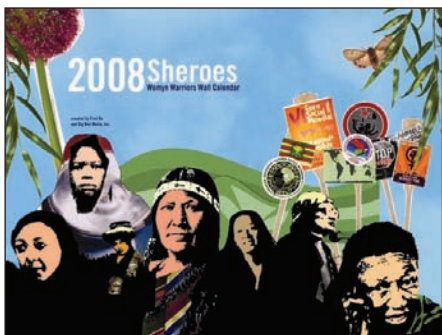
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the Broadway traffic islands were repopulated by loungers occasionally pulling down a bottle hanging by a string from a leaf-enshrouded tree branch overhead.

As in the *faits divers*, consumerist trance and class antagonism, telling it like it is and mourning what it is not fit together seamlessly. The description slips from a Whitmanic-Ginsbergian catalog of potent but mundane luxuries into a Surrealist vision of the gears of power smuggled like diamonds in a heist. Revolution is not false but not feasible either, and the bohemians in their willing poverty are not exempt from the failure, if it is one. It probably is. A society that installs "site-specific drunks" might not deserve defense. Still, the bottle that dangles like fruit, that drops like a *deus ex machina*, manifests genius if you look at it right. The artist's community is parochial only when it forgets to see this way.

Sante writes what is often called "immaculate prose." Actually his sentences are maculate in exactly the right ways, lithe and tight but stained with musk and breath. *Le mot juste* is his lodestar, as it must be for any verbal maker. This is what "kill all your darlings" means. Attributed to William Faulkner, the rule exhorts a ruthless

stamping out of treasured turns of phrase. Sante obeys. But he also complicates the maxim by matching it to a second epigraph, from a novel by Boris Vian. Another prototypical Santean character, the French Vian was a poet, translator, jazz musician, music critic and inventor who wrote crime fiction under the American-sounding pseudonym Vernon Sullivan. His weird *policier* of 1948, the title of which is translated "To Hell With the Ugly," is really called *Et on tuera tous les affreux*—roughly, "and we will kill all the awful."

Like call and response, the two phrases frame Sante's thought. They suggest that a critic of his ilk loves the things he writes about by nailing them into language. As Benjamin would be the first to admit, the "physiognomical" collector memorializes while appropriating and mastering, so that the looked-at thing henceforth travels the world tagged by the critic's interpretation, its provenance adjusted to include a new last word. In this way, however, the awful darlings remain unkillable. Wily and ever renewing, they cannot be completely known, which is why they merit anatomization in the first place. With each new old thing his eye and phrasing fall on, Sante picks up a mystery to unfold, smooth out and trickily refold. He claims it, and hands it on. ■

## The Big Yam

by JOHN FEFFER

### Brand New China

Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture.

By Jing Wang.

Harvard. 411 pp. \$28.95.

**H**eadquarters was worried. Complaints were flooding in from the Chinese countryside about the quality of the new Haier washing machines. The water pipes were defective, the peasants told the Chinese manufacturer. But when the Haier team went to investigate, they were surprised to discover that the pipes were not broken or poorly fitted. Rather, they were clogged with yam skins. The peasants had been washing their dinner ingredients, not their clothes. An American manufacturer might have lectured the consumers about the proper uses of a washing machine. Haier's CEO, Zhang Ruimin, decided instead to design a machine with wider pipes that could wash both clothes and large



CEO Zhang Ruimin with the Haier mascot in Qingdao, 2003

root vegetables. He called it the Big Yam, and the machine became a big seller in the Chinese countryside.

The Big Yam is only one of several stories that have accumulated around Zhang Ruimin. On another occasion, Haier's larger-than-life CEO ordered seventy-six defective refrigerators sledgehammered in front

*John Feffer is co-director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies.*

of workers rather than submit to the usual practice of covering up the snafu and palming off the merchandise as low-level bribes. Zhang videotaped the incident as an example of Haier's commitment to quality control. Then there's the story of the Little Prince, a cheap little Haier freezer that Chinese urbanites bought in droves because they no longer had time to shop for groceries every day but also didn't have the money for a whole new fridge.

Haier is the face of the new China. As a global company and one of the largest appliance manufacturers in the world, it has helped transform the slogan "Made in China" into "Made by China." It maintains a cooperative rather than antagonistic relationship with the Chinese state. It has developed products that serve the specific needs of the Chinese consumer. And it is part of a new wave of branding and advertising that has explained, shaped and translated market economics for more than a billion people.

In some ways, Zhang is the Mao of consumer goods. He thinks big, makes bold pronouncements, attracts acolytes, trumpets his Communist Party membership and attends to the specific attributes of Chinese society. On the other hand, he's a running-dog capitalist who makes a lot of money. It's an open question as to whether Zhang and his cohort of Chinese CEOs are either spreading American-style capitalism across the country or participating in a substantially different economic reform "with Chinese characteristics." Similarly, it's not certain whether China is advancing a state-centric "Beijing consensus" at the global level to counter the more laissez-faire "Washington consensus" or simply following the West's cues by joining the World Trade Organization and acceding to the general trends of globalization.

In *Brand New China*, Jing Wang uses Chinese advertising as an optic through which to scrutinize this tension between Eastern and Western approaches to the market, between the Haier of the Big Yam and the global company that many Americans don't even realize is Chinese. A professor of Chinese cultural studies at MIT, she is well situated with one foot in each camp: straddling not just China and the United States but also advertising and academia. Her book is a thoroughly enjoyable and well-written *tour d'horizon* of branding and advertising strategy informed by her knowledge of the field and summers spent at the advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather Beijing. She tells great stories about Haier, Lenovo, Wahaha and other Chinese firms that may or may not be building a new type of market

economy. But in her eagerness to identify a uniquely Chinese approach to the buying and selling of things, Wang underestimates some of the deeper structural forces that drive capitalism in both East and West.

**T**he ideal Chinese consumer has dazzled foreign companies for at least two centuries. The prospect of selling every Chinese person a pair of pants, a soft drink or a new car has prompted transnational corporations to invest heavily, time and again, in prying open the Chinese economy. Over the past two decades, the arrival of powerful transnational corporations with sophisticated advertising campaigns should have wiped out all the local Chinese goods and services.

But this didn't happen. First of all, the Chinese government has tilted the playing field to give the home teams an advantage by establishing laws that restrict the activities of foreign companies. Wang, however, is less interested in these top-down strategies than in the particulars of how local firms and global giants compete for Chinese hearts, minds and pocketbooks by redefining desires and creating new ones.

She cites, for instance, the Chinese search engine Baidu to demonstrate how culture can trump market power. Baidu created viral video ads that were as hilarious as they were untranslatable and revolved around the nuances of the Chinese language that their unnamed competitor (Google) could not capture. Libo beer, meanwhile, pitched itself as a distinctively local brew that could compete against not only foreign brands (Budweiser) but also powerful national brands (Tsingtao). "The beer brand, the campaign says, witnessed all the growing pains of Shanghai throughout the reform era," Wang relates. "Libo...has been with 'us' through thick and thin."

Even more radical, with the global brands saturating the top markets of Beijing and Shanghai, the local brands decamped to the countryside. For Wang, this is an example of Chinese business translating Maoist strategy into an advertising campaign. Outnumbered in the cities, Mao led his revolutionary army into rural areas to wage "spider warfare," whereby the countryside gradually surrounded the cities. Similarly, the Chinese soft-drink company Wahaha, creator of Future Cola, didn't attempt to take on the Coca-Cola and Pepsi behemoths in the cosmopolitan centers. Instead, it went deep into the interior to target peasants and citizens of smaller cities.

The global brands have adapted their marketing strategies accordingly. Global brands are not entirely tone-deaf to local

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cultures. Despite the claims of many business self-help manuals, Chevy never bombed with its Nova ("No va," or "Doesn't go," in Spanish) in Latin America; Coke never launched a major ad campaign in China with its premier brand translated into Mandarin as "bite the wax tadpole." These urban myths endure because of the delight we take in seeing corporate Goliaths felled by their own weapons. While ad campaigns with insufficient cultural nuance have bombed in China, global brands have generally been quite sophisticated in their attempts to "go native."

In China, for instance, Coca-Cola tapped into Chinese nationalism with a commercial it ran on television there during the 2002 World Cup. The ad featured a Chinese boy giving a Coke bottle filled with Chinese soil to the soccer players so that they could have a "homegrown advantage" in their game. This is only one example of Coca-Cola turning its back on its earlier strategy of teaching the world to sing in perfect harmony. Having removed "global" from its advertising vocabulary, Coke has pledged itself to "think locally and act locally." In similar fashion, Kentucky Fried Chicken has adapted its menu to include mushroom chicken porridge and Peking-style chicken rolls. McDonald's not only features corn soup on its Chinese menus; its Beijing franchises also get 95 percent of their ingredients from local sources. The purveyor of the quick meal recognizes that Chinese treat the restaurant as a family outing, not as fast food, and so has used the slogan "Get together at McDonald's; enjoy the happiness of family life." Academics have coined a rather awkward neologism for this phenomenon: glocalization.

While Colonel Sanders hawks porridge, Chinese firms like Lenovo have gone global. The computer giant made headlines in 2005 when it purchased IBM's personal computer division. Tsingtao beer is available in many US stores. Several Chinese companies have tried to break into the US market, only to come up against political opposition. The US Congress blocked the attempt by CNOOC, China's largest offshore oil producer, to purchase Unocal, and a fight is brewing over Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei's bid to purchase 3Com.

Haier, meanwhile, not only sells refrigerators throughout Europe and North America; it has also made a bid to remove the cultural "odor" of its wares. Theorist Koichi Iwabuchi applies the term "odor" to products with features that betray their local, region or national origins. Japanese animators, for instance, remove all telltale Japanese traits

from their characters so that they can more easily cross borders. Similarly, Haier created a cartoon featuring two cute brothers who travel the globe on various goodwill missions. The Haier Brothers, with their big, round eyes, do not look Chinese, and their trips to fifty-six countries transform them into global citizens. The cartoon, which absorbed a full 15 percent of the appliance manufacturer's advertising budget, even succeeds in eliminating the odor of production from the brand, since no appliances appear in the series. Instead, the cartoon simply associated the brand name with fun, adventure and humanitarianism, a potentially useful strategy for selling to an overseas audience that might otherwise associate China with human rights violations, prison labor and questionable relationships with Burma and Sudan. "Can we put a price tag on the tale-telling appeal of a brand?" Wang asks. "It is worth a king's ransom."

So forget about global versus local. Forget the dichotomy between the homogenizing pressures of globalization and the particularizing appeals of localization. Wang doesn't argue that the world is flat. Rather, in the world of advertising, the hierarchies are constantly shifting as deodorized national products compete against global brands that have skillfully acquired a local perfume. The latest version of the Haier Brothers cartoon, short videos featuring two Americans who travel around China in search of the spirit of the Olympics, proves that national brands can reacquire cultural odor when necessary, just as global brands can reassert their universal appeal if the market so demands.

China is different. The state maintains partial ownership of firms like Lenovo, and a cooperative relationship with Haier. The Chinese government continues to play a larger role in shaping economic development than in the increasingly neoliberal nations of the West. To do business in China, as everyone from Coke to McDonald's has discovered, requires thinking like the Chinese. The Chinese elite usually hire chauffeurs, so if you want to sell luxury cars, you should include a screen between front and back seats. Gift giving is different in China, companies need to acknowledge the impact of the one-child policy and consumers generally favor "safety" over "desire." There are still vestiges of socialist collectivism.

To attract Chinese consumers, then, advertisers must rely on Chinese content and symbols. But are the mechanisms they use peculiarly Chinese? For instance, Wahaha's

celebrated spider warfare resembles Wal-Mart's strategy to avoid the major retailers and establish stores in underserved, often rural areas. Although Sam Walton would later borrow certain team-building tactics from South Korean companies, it is hard to imagine him as a teenager bent over the works of Mao and Sun Tzu in an effort to apply their wisdom to American retail. When Coca-Cola cleverly used nationalism in its World Cup ad—in what might be called “the Mean Joe Green commercial with Chinese characteristics”—the appropriation of nationalism was by no means unique to the Chinese context. Just think of all the foreign brands that try to obscure their origins with US advertising campaigns that rely heavily on American flags or references to baseball.

Perhaps the more interesting blind spot is in Wang's discussion of Chinese advertisers' relationship to youth culture. It has become commonplace to observe that the Tiananmen Square generation, which took such risks to achieve political freedoms, has become satisfied with consumer freedoms instead. In 1979, the year commercial advertising returned to China, the Chinese government set a disturbing precedent when it replaced the famous Democracy Wall—the first significant post-Cultural Revolution flowering of political diversity—with the equivalent of a billboard. In the 1990s, the marketplace of new political ideas collapsed into the more conventional marketplace of new products. And so far in China, advertisers, rather than new political leaders, have tried to reach the younger generation by appealing to their residual rebelliousness.

Consider the example of Beck's beer commercials. In one particularly blatant example that Wang cites, a field of sunflowers faces east, an allusion to the Maoist song “The East Is Red” and the tradition of equating Mao with the sun, and sunflowers with the loyal masses. But in this ad, a bottle of Beck's appears in the west, attracting the attention of one quirky sunflower. “Listen to yourself,” the tag line goes. “Drink Beck's.” Wang writes, “Branding is more about resonance than inculcation. What Beck's delivered was nothing more than the younger generation's desire to go against the grain in an era bound by political taboos. Instead of staking out a new cultural position, the beer simply unearthed what was on the minds of the unruly youth at that particular historical juncture.” Chinese brands have done the same, appealing to “acting cool” and “having fun.” As Wang puts it, “Rebellious postures are chic, but they have little to do with iconoclasm.”



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Here, her discussion would have benefited from Thomas Frank's study of how US advertisers mined the counterculture in the 1970s to sell more products. His *Conquest of Cool* exhumes what now seem such transparently uncool efforts to market to the new demographic. Columbia Records ran an ad in 1968 that assured record buyers that "the Man can't bust our music." Braniff hired Andy Warhol to appear in its ads. Before Apple positioned itself as the revolutionary trying to topple totalitarian IBM, Pepsi was proclaiming itself an insurgent taking on the monolithic Coke.

China may well be different. But advertising is incorrigibly the same. Its goals are to create desires and sell more products. Although they change according to time and place, the strategies obey a similar logic. China has its 170-plus niche markets, its 80,000-plus advertising firms. And Wang points out some of its interesting quirks. For instance, for the peak sixty-five seconds of television time that follow the national news and precede the weather forecast, China Central Television holds an auction and companies pay top yuan for the five-second spot that might catapult them into brand heaven. True, the TV market is shaped by the monopoly hold the state-owned network maintains. But even this model is eroding with the proliferation of cable offerings. China's market is different, but is a fundamentally new kind of economy emerging there? Wang's survey of the new Chinese advertising reveals greater convergence than a world of difference.

Several years ago, I interviewed a Costco manager at the opening of the retailer's third major store in the Tokyo area. Costco's approach of selling in bulk to consumers with tiny kitchens and a preference for walking to local stores for fresh produce seemed so quixotic that I couldn't help asking whether the company had encountered resistance. At first, the manager said, the Japanese were taken aback by Flintstone-sized packages of meat and industrial-strength cans of cling peaches. But Costco persisted, and gradually Tokyo consumers began to adapt. "The Japanese had to learn how to shop," the manager told me.

Costco wasn't thinking like the Japanese. Despite a couple of distinctively Japanese flourishes—free samples of lychee liqueur, a larger than usual section devoted to rice—it was pursuing its own cookie-cutter approach of supersized portions. For all the money and research poured into local ad campaigns, advertising agencies can't hide

the fact that they are pushers, trying to get people to buy things they hitherto didn't know they wanted. Costco pushes bulk. McDonald's in China, as elsewhere in the world, embarked on a campaign to make children into consumers. Motorola wants to turn peasants into cellphone users. Haier wants Chinese peasants to put away their washboards and buy machines—if they want to scrub their yams as an intermediate stage between feudalism and socialism, so be it.

Wang has a more liberating view of consumers. In her analysis, they are not mindless robots buying whatever is dangled before their slavering mouths, any more than readers of romances, in the classic text of the reader-response school of literary criticism by Janice Radway (*Reading the Romance*), are mindless devourers of trash. Readers and consumers have agency. They are subjects as well as objects. They can be stubborn things, refusing to be pigeonholed into a particular demographic. Wang describes "neo-tribes" that, with their rapid shape-shifting, confound advertisers' categories, multiply China's niche markets and further lengthen the "long tail" that has replaced the mass market.

Wang wants not just to break down un-nuanced distinctions between local and global or between capitalist and communist. She describes a blurring of production and consumption as consumers participate in the creation of brands. Children watch the Haier cartoons and then talk to their parents about them. YouTubers spread the next generation of Haier Brothers videos more effectively than any top-down campaign. Bloggers and social networkers are drawn into the marketing chain. "Prosumers" create content—songs, videos, dances, artwork—that marketers then use to give their products authenticity.

Wang's book is a valuable contribution to a new kind of anthropology that studies the reciprocal relationship between culture and advertising. But *Brand New China* is not just a description of China's culture and the neo-tribes changing it. A certain utopianism lurks in her book. She envisions a future in which consumers of the world unite and throw off the shackles of intellectual property rights and corporate information control. But this is a world in which politics practically disappears and the United States and China become two halves of the same giant shopping mall. The only significant conflict will pit a billion prosumers hankering after globalized brands against the Costco cookie-cutters. It is not a pretty picture. Oh, brand new world that has such people in it. ■

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**E-mail preferred. Attach ad, typewritten if possible.**

**The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003**

# Puzzle No. 3115

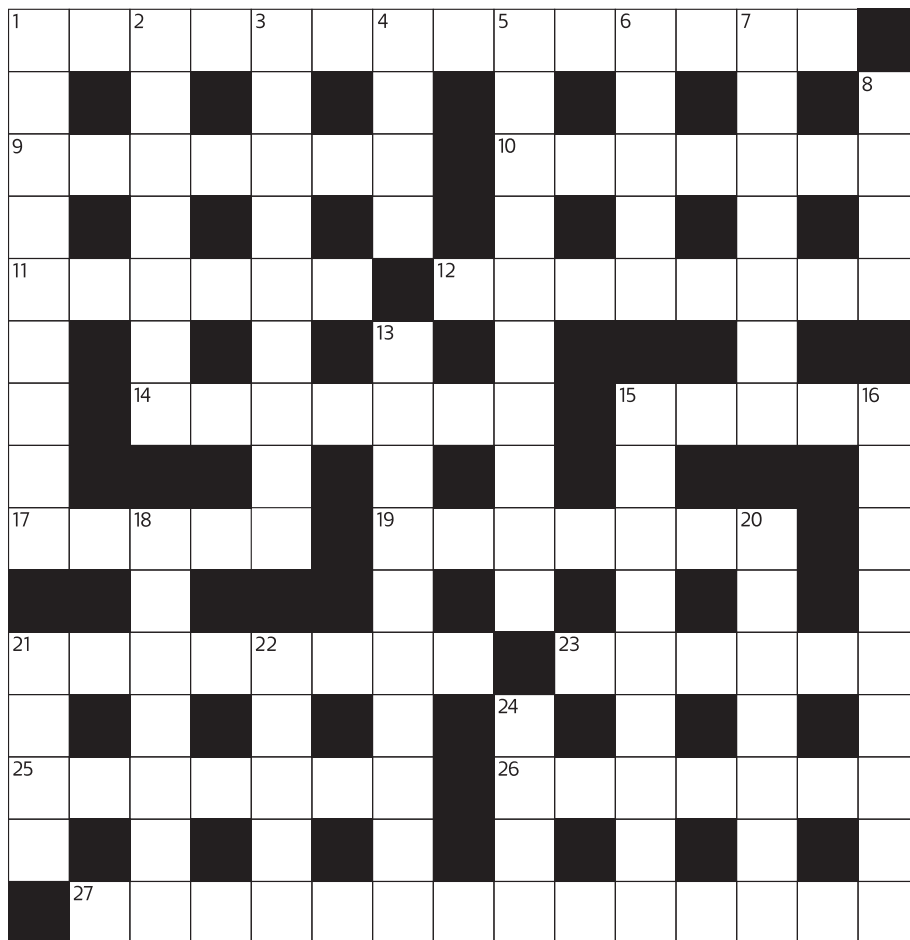
FRANK W. LEWIS

## ACROSS

- 1 In a way, too much about what the captain takes in a part of the big house, which is in a manner "much too much." (14)
- 9 Point on the thin side, alternatively Franklin's mate. (7)
- 10 Swell, according to Liza of *My Fair Lady*. (7)
- 11 One poses a problem for some who want a night out, if they can't get one. (6)
- 12 One of the things the Brits said we Yanks were. (8)
- 14 A lady's maid makes a tremendous beginning, but you get to feel bad with it. (7)
- 15 Sounds like I will shortly walk down it. (5)
- 17 One might do it to improve the program, and get rid of certain household pests. (5)
- 19 While generals carry the stars, these carry the stripes. (7)
- 21 The last thing the Brits said the Yanks were. (4,4)
- 23 A bit of untruth to possibly turn on a late beginning, being part of your understanding! (6)
- 25 I tinged the letters here to show what the guy at the news desk might be doing. (7)
- 26 What some go to Reno to do. (7)
- 27 Dieters strive for it, but it might be served up with a float. (14)

## DOWN

- 1 Another of the things the Brits said the Yanks were. (9)
- 2 Put into office one that some considered a god, as well as one who incited murder. (7)
- 3 Beat of the French, going to German opera, and speculating as to what it was all about. (9)
- 4 Not a sure cure, but you get color with it. (4)
- 5 Disposed to ill-will, the masculine type catches a small rodent with a net that has nothing in it. (10)
- 6 At no time is Verne upset by it! (5)
- 7 Cowcatchers, possibly. (7)
- 8 Looked in the Key Edition for it. (4)
- 13 Wiring what is tangled makes the old carry-all. (10)
- 15 What one who believes in prohibition does, possibly. (9)
- 16 Look at the scourges that get fluttered by the hopeful? (9)
- 18 The genus of honey-makers that moves in a straight direction. (7)
- 20 What a crab might do? Let's cut out of it! (7)
- 21 Ready for business, but nothing to write with! (4)
- 22 Going fast in a fancy way. (5)
- 24 The sort of 4 to preserve. (4)



**PUZZLED?** No more cross words! See [www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml](http://www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml).

## SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3114

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | O | O | T | H | E | D | J | A | C | K | P | O | T |
| T | P | O | A | E | A | E | U |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | F | T | E | R | T | H | E | N | A | D | I | R |   |
| M | E | N | E | P | A | A | N |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| I | N | D | I | E | S | O | A | P | O | L | L | O |   |
| N |   |   | T | U | R | B | I | N | E |   |   |   | U |
| A | U | T | O | B | V | T | F | A | C | T |   |   |   |
|   | H | A | V | O | I | D | E | D | R |   |   |   |   |
| N | E | E | D | E | O | S | S | C | A | R |   |   |   |
| U |   | A | R | B | U | T | U | S |   |   |   |   | E |
| A | U | G | U | S | T | S | P | A | W | P | A | W |   |
| N | U | P | N | S |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | A |
| C | O | A | T | I | E | O | N | C | O | L | O | R |   |
| E | R | R | S | I | E | O | D |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | A | D | D | E | S | T | P | I | R | A | T | E | S |



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✦ **Installation** - Look for tubs that are designed for "easy" installation. Even if you don't install it yourself, your plumber or handyman will save time and effort (and save *you* money), with these easy install models.

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*Please mention promotional code 35318.*

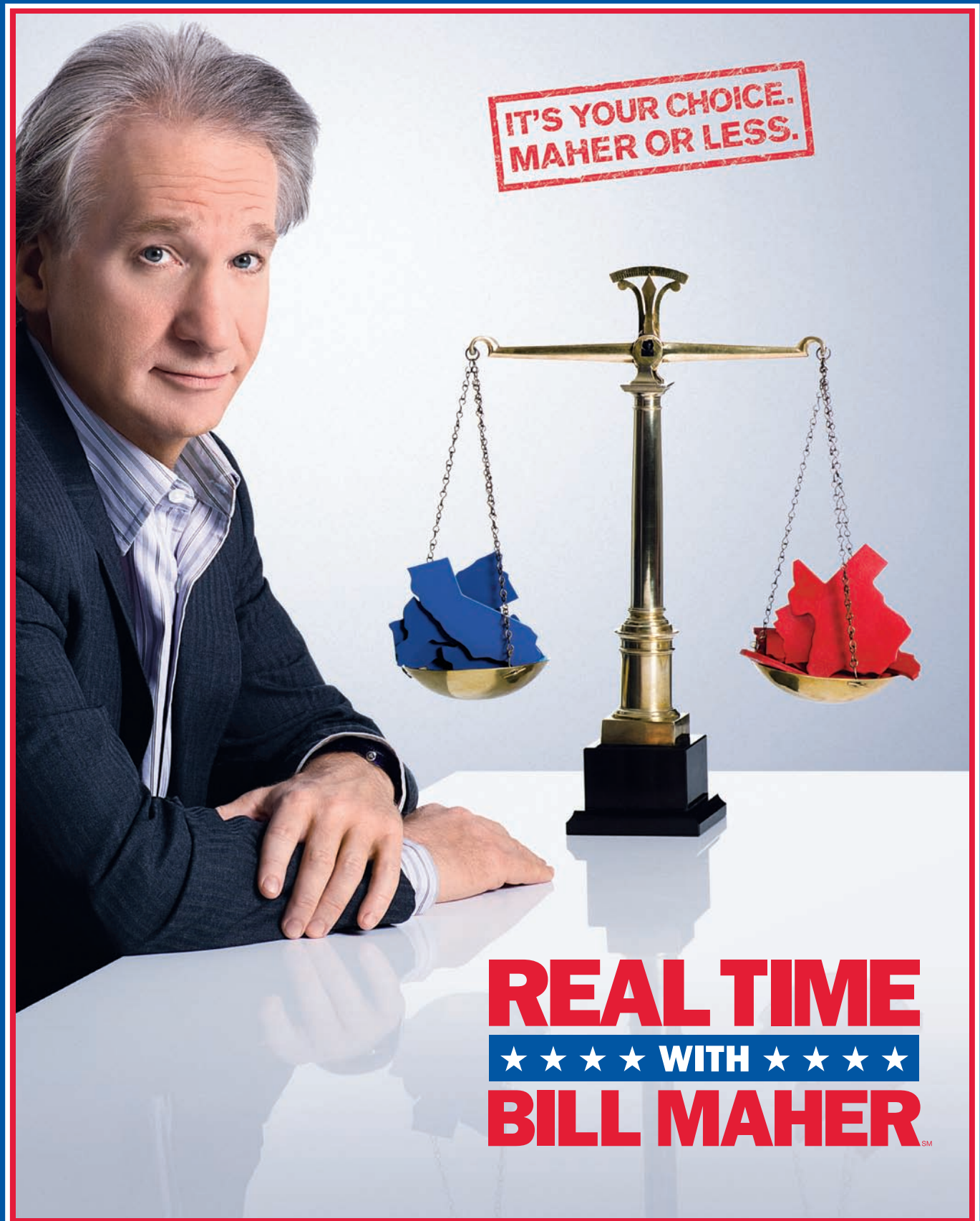
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